ENGLISH STUDIES IN AFRICA

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EDITORIAL

A MYTHOLOGICAL COUNTRY WHERE NIGHTINGALES FLOURISH

P. C. BIRKINSHAW

WE publish in this issue a series of talks arranged jointly by the South African Council for English Education and the English Service of the S.A.B.C. We are grateful to the authors of these talks for permission to publish them as they were delivered, practically without retouching. Broadcast as part of last year's celebrations, they constitute a popular survey by eminent authorities of the state of English after fifty years of Union.

Like the United States, South Africa is a polygenetic country that uses English. It differs from the United States in using it predominantly but not exclusively, Afrikaans, many Bantu and some Indian languages competing locally. As the language of the most powerful political group, Afrikaans is used and propagated everywhere, and there are many, no doubt, who wish it were our national tongue. Of the English speakers, some of British stock use their language without a care for its origin or destiny; others are anxious that it may never cease to be a conduit of British values here; and others still, of Continental rather than British extraction, use English in the letter as the British themselves do (often better), but in the spirit of a world language severed from, or only casually connected with, its roots in the history of the British Isles. Within this broad pattern a struggle goes on for the soul of South Africa's evolving nationhood.

Afrikaans has the strength of an inner position. It has grown up here. It belongs here and nowhere else. Perhaps it is true to say that the measure of one's South Africanism is the affection one feels for Afrikaans. Unfortunately, however, it is compromised as the tool of a regime which has lost the sympathy of the world at large, as well as of many people in South Africa. But it rules; and, with the pertinacity of the revolutionary governments of France in the 1790's, it is legislating South Africa into its own image. It has already removed the chief orectic symbols of British origin, but

before the broadest of these loved influences (for so we may translate *orexis*) it stands nonplussed. In respect of the English language and all it embodies it has no inner position. Rather is it on the outside looking in.

The English speakers in this mild state of siege, are like the three little pigs. First are the great majority of honest Johns who were (as they so often assert) "born and bred in South Africa." The sea which once joined them to Britain now severs them from her. No more home-guilt, no more divided loyalties and less and less (except this persistent language) to recall them. South Africa is theirs as exclusively and almost as long as *onse mense's,* the Afrikaners'. Their memories and their fathers' fathers' are of the green sugar-downs, the paradisal Cape, the Karoo where the stars reach so low one seems in space. They can sing from the heart:

> Uit die blou van onse hemel, uit die diepte van ons see,
> Oor ons ewige gebergtes, waar die kranze antwoord gee,
> Oor ons ver verlate vlaktes, met die kreun van ossewa,
> Ruis die stem van ons geliefde; van ons land, Suid-Afrika.

Grand sentiments they are; and it is not hard to see how, with the roar of an Ellis Park Test crowd, they come to be taken for the very substance of democratic nationhood. But the reality is a profounder, slower thing, its fullness "the establishment of liberty for the realization of moral ends." The words are from Lord Acton's *Nationality,* an essay of great significance to-day in South Africa. For he goes on to contrast two ideals of nationhood, which he calls respectively the French, "founded on the perpetual supremacy of the collective will, to which every other influence must defer . . . against which no obligation enjoys authority and [to which] all resistance is tyrannical;" and the English, which "represents nationality as an essential but not a supreme element in determining the forms of the State." Love of South Africa is good, but it is only a beginning. Little pigs who see it as journey's end are building their houses of straw. They could be easy meat for a big bad wolf fond of French cooking.

The second little pig is the English-speaking South African intellectual. His sympathies are liberal and liberalism is universal truth poured into national bottles. The universalism of the liberal derives (among other sources) from the "self-evident" truths of 1776, which have risen with the sun of America to meridian power. His nationalism is not so easy to place. Liberalism is

historically associated with the rise to freedom of oppressed races, and in South Africa it has found its natural outlet in a self-determination it can never share, that of the African majority. The big bad wolf has especial cause to be incensed. Not only is this little pig building his house of wood, but he is cutting down the big bad wolf's own trees to do so.

The third little pig does not want to forsake Britain. You cannot be loyal to South Africa, he feels, by being disloyal to Britain. In other words he is an evolutionary, not a revolutionary. He alone in South Africa refuses to become a nationalist: believing (in his clearer moments) with Acton that "the theory of nationality is a retrograde step in history." He was cast for the hero of this tale, but that was in 1910. By 1961, the huffs and the snuffs of the B.B.W. have grown so alarming as to make him forget his part, forget his play and strongly incline to run wee, wee, wee all the way home. The trouble with this little pig is that he is a sentimentalist and has lost the intellectual fibre of his beliefs: for instance, that "The coexistence of several nations under the same State is a test as well as the best security of its freedom. It is also one of the chief instruments of civilization; and as such it is in the natural and providential order and indicates a state of greater advancement than the national unity which is the ideal of modern liberalism." The third little pig lacks the intellectual reinforcement for such convictions. He has let the dust gather too long on Acton, as perhaps on Bagehot, Mill, Burke, Locke, Milton and Hooker. His loyalties are complex and concentric, while everyone tells him to regress to the simple and single. He is ridiculed for idealizing a 'home' that has long ceased to exist. He lacks credal phrases. No Engels or Jefferson has arisen to extol the Commonwealth: Britain seems to have had the character to produce it, but not the intellect to explain it. One looks in vain to the Statute of Westminster for the excitement of the Communist Manifesto or the Declaration of Independence. The sole evolutionary force in world politics, the one spirit that seeks neither pure unity nor mere multiplicity, but union with maximum indeterminacy—the phrases are Bergson's—can, by its very nature, be suggested, but never defined; for "a perfect definition applies only to a complete reality; vital properties are never entirely realized, though always on the way to become so; they are not so much *states* as *tendencies*." Then where can the little pig find his justifications? In the broad tendencies of English literature *studied in such a way as not to ignore them.*

Then he will recognize the brickbats he endures—'disloyal', 'half-hearted', 'out-moded', 'un-South African'—as his very contribution to saving South Africa from the shadow of totalitarianism.

Our contemporary *Symposium* is a most welcome and valuable new survey of education, conceived as a sort of perennial golden wedding present to the Johannesburg College of Education and the English-speaking community of Southern Africa which it has served for fifty years. Two issues dominate its first number, the struggle against centralization and the importance of English. The chief contribution, by the (then) Rector of the College, Professor R. E. Lighton, embraces both. He contrasts the dominant Afrikaans outlook "of determinism, of predestination and divine guidance" with the secular "changing, adjusting, evolving" temper of the British tradition, and adds: "These two predispositions or biases not only diverge; they appear irreconcilable." That is a tough word and should give pause to those who feel South African nationhood is round the corner and all we need do is celebrate it. Rather to the contrary, Professor Lighton concludes that "the English-speaking section would find its interests better safeguarded if the two-stream policy persisted for the forseeable future." But when he turns to those interests, those cultural interests, that is, it is in the diffuse concepts of a "world language" that he finds them, and in the values of "the Anglo-American world group with its associated free nations," not in the massive continuity of English literature. This is a disturbing omission. No one quarrels with what is said, only with what is ignored, the specific British tradition, incarnate in its books. Tradition, "the past in its entirety, prolonged into the present, abiding there, actual and acting": Bergson again. Is this last and greatest of our 'loved influences' to follow the rest into discredit and oblivion? No one defends it in *Symposium.* As a 'world language,' of course, decently insulated from the 'scepter'd isle' that evolved it. Mr Brian Rose speaks appreciatively of the ancient diversity of our origins, "bastardising language and culture and producing a robustness and ultimate tolerance;" but a little later he talks revealingly of building a United States of Southern Africa. Mr C. T. Gordon does best in our line, gallantly indeed, but his 'Reflections on the teaching of history in South African schools' shows that if the British concede universalism the Afrikaner imposes nationalism. In Canada, Australia and New Zealand, Mr Gordon points out, "a detailed study of British history from pre-Roman times is made."

We have no Fichtean designs on our readers. "See that with you the chain is not broken . . .": the peroration to *Reden an die Deutschen,* invades our gentle woodwinds with a trumpet. But it does raise squarely those considerations of ancestry that oppose *l'état des principes* with *l'état des patries.* South Africa is not nearly set as a nation. How far the process should or can be accelerated by mass media is interesting to speculate; but the conservative mind must feel a little sceptical at the idea of history being made by advertising campaigns. A nation, a mixed nation, a little Commonwealth, as South Africa must always be, is a number of organic minorities which have achieved or seek to achieve a higher unity. In this evolution it is necessary for minorities as themselves to seek accommodation among themselves in the light of common principles. He has obviously no faith in South Africa who does not believe that common principles exist and can be found, if sought in the right direction, to unite Afrikaner, Briton and African. What is vital is for each to persist in its own identity in quest of accommodations that do not denature it. In this way England, Scotland and Wales have achieved a nationhood of living balance while Ireland offers for both sides the contrast of failure. Again the evolution of nationhood cannot be planned, imposed nor rushed. The Reich that was to last a thousand years did not last a thousand weeks. It was the product of that dangerous, over-optimistic intellectualism Acton condemned a hundred years ago. "The greatest adversary of the rights of nationality is the modern theory of nationality. By making the State and the nation commensurate with each other in theory, it reduces practically to a subject condition all other nationalities that may be within the boundary. It cannot admit them to an equality . . . because the State would then cease to be national, which would be a contradiction of the principle of its existence."

The speck that started this pearl or boil of an editorial was the phrase Mr Dan Jacobson uses of England in his contribution to the present number: "a mythological country where nightingales flourish." To Wordsworth "We have been looked up to as a people who have acted nobly; whom their constitution of government has enabled to speak and write freely, and who therefore have thought comprehensively; as a people among whom philosophers and poets, by their surpassing genius, their wisdom and knowledge of human nature, have circulated and made

familiar divinely-tempered sentiments and the purest notions concerning the duties and true dignity of individual and social man in all situations and under all trials." What have our lessons and seminars and methodologies done about this? Think of the young South African: in love with the broad beauty, brief history and budding literature of his land; shopping through the paperback bazaar of world literature; drinking in the universalism of the American creed like a well-known mineral water, perhaps identifying himself with its rosy-featured consumers; and taught in his English classes not to have faith, but to split hairs. "Fled is that music? Do we wake or sleep?"

FAULKNER'S CORRUPT TEMPLE

R. F. HAUGH

WHILE the Old South of William Faulkner is in some ways a myth, underlying that myth is a genuine geographical area with a very real history and a very real social and economic plight.

In order properly to read Faulkner, one must keep facts in mind while at the same time following the free play of fancy in Faulkner's management of myth and symbol. Historical and economic facts are seldom made overt by Faulkner, nor is the relationship between symbolic movement and the events of social change, with rare exceptions, a clear one.

Two questions come to the mind of the discursive reader: why must Faulkner be so obscure? And if he tells a truth, what sort of truth is it? The answer to the first is that Faulkner had no taste for the plodding motion of the conventional novel. Having read Joyce, among others, he knew that experience does not come in calendar chronology, nor does the meaning of life show itself in the old stereotypes of 'character' and 'plot'.

The answer to the second question is that, while it is true what he says about Dixie, it is not true in the sociological sense usually implied by the question. That is, if one went to Faulkner's South and began a survey, knocking on doors and saying, "I'm conducting research on Faulkner—how many nymphomaniacs in the household, please?" he would be escorted off the property by outraged Mississippians.

Only recently have we confused the true and the typical. We did not ask of Hamlet that he be a typical Danish prince, yet we are dazzled by the truth of his being. When we come into the twentieth century, however, our search for 'truth' takes on another vocabulary drawn from the social studies as we measure statistical entities. Twentieth-century titles reflect this obsession with the typical: *Death of a Salesman, Knock on Any Door, Man in the Gray Flannel Suit.*

The difficulty with reading Faulkner is that he gives the semblance of modern 'truth' in that his personages have psychological and sociological facets, while actually he moves them about

in accordance with older literary patterns: myth, symbol, and allegory, but adapted to the new intellectual idiom. Hence his symbolic movements are most puzzling for the unwary reader, because they seem not symbolic at all, but realistic.

First readers of his novel *Sanctuary* (1931), for instance, accepted it as a sensational story of a southern college girl who was raped in a bootlegger's shack, and subsequently was resident for some months as a willing house girl in a Memphis brothel.

It was not until George Marion O'Donnell's essay, 'Faulkner's Mythology' *(The Kenyon Review,* Summer, 1939) that Faulkner's traditional intention with strange new materials became clear. Then Temple Drake emerged not just a nymphomaniac college girl, but Southern Womanhood Corrupted by Amoral Modernism (the gangster Popeye). *Sanctuary* became a parable of a society with its economic taproot cut, drifting into degeneracy and sterility. With its supports rotted away, the verandah upon which the southern belle had held court so graciously had collapsed.

Requiem for a Nun (1950) is a sequel to *Sanctuary* in that Temple Drake reappears, but the determinism which drove Temple helplessly into degeneracy now is supplanted by a conception of free will. Faulkner's acceptance of the Nobel Prize for literature in December of 1950 uses language indicating his frame of mind:

> I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance.

The publisher's blurb on the Signet edition which binds together *Sanctuary* and *Requiem for a Nun,* speaks of "Sin and Redemption —about Temple Drake, the reckless Mississippi debutante who expiated a youthful sin by confession . . ." If this were the movement of Temple—from sin to redemption—her story would not be nearly so remarkable. Temple, however, moved from the unmoral world of degeneracy, where the word *sin* has no meaning, where her conduct was merely that of a malfunctioning organism in a failing society. She moved to the moral universe of *Requiem for a Nun* by becoming aware of immorality, and this gave her choice. She moved from the world of the glands to the world of the heart, to borrow another phrase from Faulkner's Nobel Prize acceptance address. Once Temple has recognized immorality in her conduct, she has made the first step toward the Kingdom of

God, and it is a giant stride indeed. Her giant stride has meaning for the twentieth century in its morass of sociological and psychological relativism.

Throughout *Sanctuary,* Temple is a helpless, driven creature who, under the stimulus of fear, runs aimlessly, spins, runs again, then falls on her knees in a mass of rubbish. Her only defence is status, which fails her because her society no longer functions. She cannot call upon God because she has no moral nature:

> She screamed, feeling her lungs emptying long after all the air was expelled, and her diaphragm laboring long after her chest was empty, and watched the old man go down the hall at a wide-legged shuffling trot, the stick in one hand and the other elbow cocked at an acute angle from his middle. Running, she passed him—a dim, spraddled figure standing at the edge of the porch—and ran on into the kitchen and darted into the corner behind the stove. Crouching, she drew the box out and drew it before her. Her hand touched the child's face, then she flung her arms around the box clutching it, staring across it at the pale door and trying to pray. But she could not think of a single designation for the heavenly father, so she began to say, "My father's a judge; my father's a judge."

The status involved in "my father's a judge" no longer has meaning in the society which has produced Popeye. Nor does any of the old kingdom, of which Temple Drake was princess and vestal virgin, exist in its old vitality and graciousness.

In the events to follow: the rape, the sojourn in the Memphis brothel, in the trial of the innocent Godwin, she is a driven, helpless creature, progressively degenerate. At the last she causes the death of an innocent man by refusing to bear witness. She has nothing against him; it is just that she has no capacity for responding to moral stimuli.

Requiem for a Nun is twenty years later Faulkner time, but only eight years later Temple time. This time Temple does bear witness, again in an affair involving murder. Her manner of bearing witness, the peculiar nature of the event she witnesses, and the one to whom she bears witness, all are clues to Faulkner's search for meaning in twentieth-century chaos.

Requiem for a Nun is not a very good novel, one hears on all sides. It is a hybrid, made of narrative, bald political essay, and dramatic dialogue. I have no inclination to defend Faulkner's

experimentation in form, although it does not disturb me. But the ideas contained in the essays and in the dramatic fragments, measured against the Faulkner of twenty years ago, are fascinating and provocative. The various parts of the novel are not discrete and separate in theme, if they are in plot structure; they counterpoint and illuminate reciprocally.

The story of Temple Drake, now wife to Gowan Stevens, as a mother of two children, as a 'sister' to a Negro prostitute, as a potential back-slider into Memphis degeneracy, and finally as a woman capable of moral responsibility, is a projection in narrative symbol of the coming of law by social contract to Yoknapatapha County. From degeneracy, which is moral vacuum, Temple moves, by bearing witness to the death of her child, and the consequent death by electric chair of her Negro sister and confidante, to the ordered universe of obedience to moral law. She does it by recognizing her disobedience, a response of which she was organically incapable in *Sanctuary*. If we were to continue George Marion O'Donnell's myth symbols, she becomes Southern Womanhood Redeemed; she shows a way for the South, and indeed for all in the twentieth century.

When Pete comes from the Memphis brothel, carrying letters Temple had written to his brother Red eight years ago, Pete discovers that he can get more than the blackmail which had brought him to Mississippi. He discovers that he can get Temple. She is ready to do it all over again. Once more responding helplessly to malfunctioning sexual energies (here too symbolic of her failing society), she would abandon children, husband, status, and go with Pete back into that old life.

She is prevented by an event intimately related to her personal history, symbolically related to the South, related to the role of the Negro in Faulkner's South, and technically related to Faulkner's unique use of sexual function as religious myth. Temple, a few years before, had taken into her home a Negro prostitute named Nancy Mannigoe, as cook, maid, and confidante. In long talk-fests, heads together over the kitchen table, the two became as sisters, sharing past experiences, laughing, pitying, experiencing a compelling kinship.

When Temple would go away with Pete it is Nancy who objects. With the strong sense of family and tribal loyalty common to Faulkner's Negroes, she first tries to reason with Temple. That failing, in deliberate judgment she kills the baby in its crib. By

that immoral—not degenerate—act, she brings Temple to bear witness. Temple bears witness first to Nancy's sin and the punishment for that sin; through that experience she comes to bear witness for her past acts and reaches an awareness of moral responsibility for the death of her baby and for the execution of Nancy.

Such a sequence of events, which serves to give entrance to the moral universe by the conversion of an act of degeneracy to one of immorality, is found elsewhere in Faulkner. One recalls the attempt of Charles Bon in *Absalom! Absalom!* to enter the moral tradition by inducing his half-brother Henry to kill him. Fratricide is within the moral universe; if his brother kills him, his father must recognize paternity of his dead mulatto son. In *The Sound and the Fury,* Quentin seeks to establish incest with Candace, his sister. Thus he will gain the tragic dignity of Oedipus, within the moral tradition, and thus save Candace from the degeneracy which loose sexuality with the Snopeses implies. Quentin commits suicide still pursuing that idea in his frantic, doomed last moments.

It is a mistake, however, to dwell exclusively upon sexual images in Faulkner, important as they are in his system of symbolic commentary upon social change. Too many critics have been so enthralled by Faulkner's sexual symbolism that they have neglected two very vital facets of his art: his interest in American political theory, and his use of law and lawyers.

Faulkner's most loved places are the court-house and its surrounding square, the jail, and the lawyer's office. His stories teem with lawyers, judges, sheriffs, and the hangers-on, the loafers about the corridors who by their talk fill the air with the sense of law and its importance to the individual. Law in Faulkner is not just a negative, prohibitory agent; it is a structure by which the individual may find his relationship to the state, and ultimately to his God. Faulkner knows criminal law and civil law, and uses both in the circumstances of his novels. But he is profoundly interested in political law and in the nature of the state.

In his later works, such as *Intruder in the Dust* and *Requiem for a Nun,* Faulkner has brought into direct issue the problem of consent and obedience to the rule of law in the state. *Intruder in the Dust* dramatizes the issue by a lynching, which is first a local police action, but which enlarges to engage the county, state and federal government. In events which have to do with discovering evidence which will free Lucas Beauchamp, a Negro, Faulkner

develops a relationship between a white boy and a Negro which derives from the theory of natural rights. Charles Mallison, like Huck Finn, discovers in himself a natural sense of justice. He, like Huck, makes a painful decision in rejecting village *mores* concerning the Negro, as he obeys a nobler law. Charles enlists a Negro boy, his age, and one of Faulkner's indomitable spinsters (who has been a 'sister' to Lucas's wife Molly—the two children together). The three uncover evidence which saves Lucas from lynching. The moment of reversal by the mob in front of the jail is acutely interesting, for here too, moral law is discovered in the death of a brother. To lynch a black man suspected of murdering a white man violates no moral law in the South; but when before their eyes the Negro murderer is supplanted by white brother killing white brother—the shift done so quickly that, as in residual vision, a sort of moral identity occurs—the lynching becomes an act of immorality. Brother cannot kill brother—that is age-old moral law. Now, on the court-house lawn, degeneracy has become immorality, and the mob turns and melts shamefacedly away from the jail.

In *Requiem for a Nun* law has two forms. One has to do with Nancy in court, charged with child murder, and Nancy in the death house, with Temple's long ordeal at the trial and her later appeal to the governor of the state. During her ordeal, Temple bears witness finally to her own individual moral responsibility for her actions. She enters into a moral contract with God. The other kind of law develops through the building of a jail in the Mississippi of the 1830's, and the formation of a social contract which produces the county as an organic growth process of the federal republic. The two kinds of law are unrelated in plot structure, but they counterpoint thematically.

The 1830 passages in *Requiem for a Nun,* written in headlong, breathless narrative, create in almost text-book clarity a demonstration of the social contract theory of Hobbes, as restated for his own purposes by Rousseau, and adapted by Jefferson to the particular needs of the young United States. Hobbes was very much concerned with origins of the state: the original consent and its terms as defence against tyranny. So is Faulkner, in his fictional account of how a county came into being, with the acts of free men, by consent and obedience, creating a society for mutual benefit:

So the old lock was not even a symbol of security; it was a gesture of salutation, of free men to free men, of civilisation across not just the 300 miles of wilderness to Nashville, but the 1,500 to Washington; of respect without servility, allegiance without debasement to the government which they had helped to found and had accepted with pride but still as free men, still free to withdraw from it at any moment when the two of them found themselves no longer compatible—so long as the government remembered to let men live free, not under it but beside it.

Rousseau was concerned with the freedom of the individual, and used the social contract as a convenient lever with which to swing his conceptions of individuality. Somewhere between Hobbes and Rousseau is Jefferson. Like Hobbes, he was interested in the origins of the state and in the defence against tyranny; but to this he brought the natural rights theory of Rousseau, with a belief even more firm in the innate goodness of the natural man. Faulkner follows Jefferson, producing the unique American conception of the natural man, who, recognizing his own propensities for evil, enters into a contract with the state for mutual benefit.

When the jail was broken into and the lock, door and all, disappeared, the hangers-on at this first jail built the first courthouse, and they named the county seat Jefferson, for Thomas Jefferson Pettigrew, first storekeeper, first postmaster, first jailer. When a mob was forming to lynch a culprit, Pettigrew

> stood there being looked at frail and child-sized, impermeable as diamond and manifest with portent, bringing into that backwoods room a thousand miles deep in pathless wilderness, the whole vast incalculable weight of federality, not just representing the government, nor even himself just the government, he was the United States.
>
> "Uncle Alec hasn't lost any lock," he said. "That was Uncle Sam."
>
> After a moment, someone said, "What?"
>
> "That's right," Pettigrew said. "Whoever put that lock on . . . made a voluntary gift to the United States, and the same law covers the United States as covers minor children; you can give something to them, but you can't take it back . . ."

What relationship has the social contract and the formation of the federal idea in Jefferson, Mississippi, in the 1830's, to the trial

and execution of Nancy Mannigoe, and to Temple Drake, witness to that trial?

Clearly there is a yielding to a higher law so that individual freedom (which unchecked, becomes degeneracy and chaos) is exchanged for a greater freedom through obedience. Individuality is not lost, but on the contrary is tremendously strengthened. The law is not an oppressor, but a discipline and a supporting structure, giving strength to the individual because of his consent and his obedience.

Before seeking the final meaning to Faulkner's counterpoint between social contract in the origins of the state, and moral responsibility in the individual, permit me by way of clarification the sort of imaginative leap that Faulkner might make. Recently I was reading Hawthorne and Faulkner at the same period, so that my mind was saturated with the ideas of both men. It came to me that, in a way, Hester's moral growth in *The Scarlet Letter* bears a remarkable resemblance to that of Temple Drake. I wish no question of influence to intrude here; the relationship is presented merely for illumination of Faulkner's obscure meanings. Make allowance as well for the far different sense of structure and idiom in each man.

Hester, like Temple, does not respond to the idea of moral responsibility stated abstractly; and in fact, generates lawless energies because of her hostility or indifference to community sanctions: the pillory, the scarlet letter, the ostracism. Hester successfully evades responsibility and projects (to use the modern term) all sense of guilt into those strictures of society which have been laid upon her. Her growth in irresponsible lawlessness is epitomized by Hawthorne's sentence, "The Scarlet Letter had not done its office." In fact, Hester's first movement toward an individual moral sense of responsibility comes not from any awareness of her relationship to society. It comes only when she sees that, by conspiracy with her evil husband Chillingworth, she has conspired in the death of the only man she loves, Arthur Dimmesdale. After she has interviewed her elderly husband and charged him with satanic doings, she sees that he is an image of her own unsuspected darker side; that she conspired with him because she mirrored him, in part. Recognition of that sin "threw a dark light on Hester's state of mind, revealing much that she might not otherwise have acknowledged to herself."

Like Hester, Temple must see that she has conspired, in a way, to produce the death of a loved personal relative; that she, not society, is primarily to blame. Like Hester, Temple is at one point ready to do it all over again—to go back into lawless degeneracy. Like Hester, Temple tries to run away when she sees the consequences of her behaviour, but again like Hester, Temple is brought back, saved by her partner in sin who is stronger than she, and who gives up life in the name of moral order. Arthur takes Hester by the hand and leads her up the steps of the scaffold for the third time (the only *effective* time) and there makes her bear witness to the law for which he is dying.

Nancy Mannigoe, in effect, takes Temple by the hand and causes her to bear witness to her degenerate past, to see the sinfulness in her wild desire to return to degeneracy; and finally, by her death, to make Temple bear witness to her personal share in the disaster, to make her accept moral responsibility in a moral universe.

Temple undergoes this change from "glands to heart" during her ordeal with Nancy. She tells the Governor of Mississippi, in her appeal for clemency, of the Temple Drake of eight years ago. She tells him that she "liked evil" and that she could have escaped from that brothel—"climbed down a drainpipe any time and got away"—only she didn't want to. To-day she recognizes that capacity of free will; eight years ago she did not. She tells him that it was still the old Temple Drake after eight years, not Mrs Gowan Stevens. It was Temple Drake who had chosen an "ex-dopefiend nigger whore as the only animal in Jefferson that spoke Temple Drake's language . . ." And it was Temple Drake who welcomed Pete and a chance to do it all over. Only this time, Nancy, her confidante, spoke not only Temple Drake's language, she spoke an older language too, and responded to an old moral pattern. This sister, this black *alter ego,* showed Temple —by a deliberate willed commission of a sin—the way to reach above degeneracy into immorality. Once Temple has learned this, she has risen to take her stride toward redemption. When Temple saw that she was responsible for the death of her child, that she had conspired with Nancy to bring death to a loved one—to two loved ones—then she was ready to make her contract with moral law.

From wilderness to a federal republic in the name of consent and obedience to the rule of law in a social contract; from the

wilderness of degeneracy to individual moral responsibility—such is the interplay of Faulkner's ideas in political and private morality. These two related novels mark clearly Faulkner's movement from an early preoccupation with social and economic determinism—told often in sexual allegory—to his present interest in traditional moral and ethical attitudes.

THE PROGRESS OF IRIS MURDOCH

OLGA McDONALD MEIDNER

INTRODUCTION

Iris Murdoch's first novel, *Under the Net,*[1] was tremendously uccessful, and deservedly so. Having met the author at Cam-ridge in 1948, I was very interested to see the announcements nd highly favourable reviews with which her first book was reeted, and when later I found the opportunity to read it, it fforded me the keenest enjoyment.

Under the Net has a superbly drawn male hero, who tells the tory in the first person, and who is more fully imagined than one would believe a young woman could imagine a young man. It has uproarious humour; it incorporates philosophical ideas and xplores moral values; it has highly evocative descriptions of London and Paris; it combines intellectuals, film personalities, ookies, disreputables, in an unusual, convincing and informative nixture; it has wit and, in the texture of the writing, great distinc-ion. I read it again, to see whether it was as good as it seemed. t was better: in the entertaining adventures of the hero a pattern merged which, as is shown by the quotation from Dryden on the pening page, is the underlying story of the book:

> All, all of a piece throughout:
> Thy Chase had a Beast in view:
> Thy Wars brought nothing about;
> Thy Lovers were all untrue.
> 'Tis well an Old Age is out,
> And time to begin a New.

eneath the brilliant surface, the author describes the steps by hich the hero, the irresponsible, a-social, highly gifted literary ack, Jake Donaghue, brings himself and his great but precariously alanced resources sufficiently under control to become a serious riter.

If there is a fault in *Under the Net* it is an attractive one— omanticism. Authors, drunks, promiscuity, lying, meanness, Lon-

[1] *Under the Net* (London, 1954).

don, Paris, are all treated slightly sentimentally, whereas the total intent seems to be realistic; and the serious main theme, the nature of the literary creator, merits realistic treatment. But when, as in this book, some things in life which many people of goodwill find too difficult and distressing to face head-on (such as Jake's shattered nerves, his attitude to money or to telling the truth, or his essential, indispensable selfishness) are met with indulgent humour instead, this is valuable. We evade their full force, but do not fall into neurotic escapism and deny their existence.

Among the many reviewers who rightly acclaimed *Under the Net* was Daniel George, who wrote in *The Broadsheet* and is quoted on the dust jacket of the Reprint Society's edition of 1955:

> . . . There has been nothing like it before; there can be nothing like it again. It is a new *kind* of novel, to be enjoyed on several levels of appreciation and re-read with heightened perception.

I certainly endorse the praise. Unfortunately the statement "There can be nothing like it again" seems to be borne out by Iris Murdoch's other three novels.[2]

None of the later novels, though they have been well received[3] and though we may admire them, can afford as much pleasure and entertainment as *Under the Net.* The theme of the first novel is nearly as serious as those of its successors, but a light tone is sustained throughout by an artistic *tour de force.* Since then there has been a growth in moral stature and psychological insight, yet none of the later novels can so delight a reader, and none testifies to experience so varied or a sensibility so lively, as those which inform every page of *Under the Net.* There has been an increase of intellect over intuition: this in itself is no loss, but invention seems to have gradually flagged, and on close study the later novels show a loss of skill and artistry in handling words. Nevertheless, *The Bell* is more important than *Under the Net,* because it is more serious and because at its best it is greater. I think, for example, of Nick's sermon to Toby, in Chapter 21, a mock sermon yet deadly serious, which moves the reader to pity and terror for preacher, hearer and himself.

[2] *The Flight from the Enchanter* (1956), *The Sandcastle* (1957), *The Bell* (1958).

[3] e.g. In *The New Statesman & Nation,* 15 November, 1958, the feature 'Books in General' was devoted to a long review (exceeding a full page) of *The Bell,* in which Miss Murdoch was called "the foremost novelist of her generation."

One hopes to see, from Miss Murdoch's pen, a novel as artistic s the first and as serious as the fourth. The writer is still growing, nough not in all ways at once. Her fine intellect and moral sense nreaten to overwhelm her artistic sense, instead of duly sub-rdinating it. The delight of a 'born writer' in observing and nitating contemporary life at large, for its own sake, has disap-eared, and been replaced by cerebration as to plot, symbolism, haracterization. A sustained excellence in the style has become nore desirable than before, to make a *present* impression on the eader at each given moment, an artistic and not merely an ntellectual impression. Such excellence was characteristic of *Jnder the Net.* It was nearly maintained in *The Flight from the Enchanter,* which failed for other reasons, being fatally over-mbitious. The author wisely turned to a much simpler project in *The Sandcastle.* But in that novel and *The Bell,* except when her maginative sympathy reaches white heat, the style is prosaic and he narrator's tone is at times undistinguished and insensitive.

After the first, Iris Murdoch's novels are conceived in the ntellect and written by working as it were *outwards* towards the verbal presentation; but often the work stops short of *presenting* he invented fiction to the reader's imagination, and merely indi-ates it.

In writing of this novelist's progress, it is difficult to 'prove' a oss of inventive power; a critic can only marvel at abundant nvention when he finds it. But it is possible to demonstrate and liscuss intellectual elements in novels; and as for style, the nandling of language, it is the very core of literary criticism.[4] Iris Murdoch's loss of assurance in handling words is noticeable: it is a strange, objectively demonstrable and probably remediable eature of her puzzling sequence of four very intelligent novels, ach different from the last.

Readers of *Under the Net* will recall that there was not merely ssurance, but aplomb, in the handling of language. Think, for example, of the meeting in Madge's flat, between Jake and 'Sacred Sammy' Starfield. Not only does the diction of the whole inter-view, with its slang and betting men's argot, effectively present he contrast between the ex-bookie and the intellectual Jake, hrough whose eyes we see Sam; but Sammy is even given his own

Lest some readers should resent being required to *eat* the core, I have relegated most of it to notes. I believe they will be found to contain seeds.

brand of figurative speech, comically in keeping with his character: when Jake suggests that Sammy win some money for him on horses, instead of insultingly giving it to him:

> Sammy was overjoyed. "Done!" he said. "What a sportsman! But we'll make a sight more than fifty pounds. I know today's card like my own daughter. It's a poem."[5]

Iris Murdoch's people still speak in character, but the verbal exuberance has quite dried up.

PART ONE

In what follows I propose to describe the contrasting techniques of Iris Murdoch's novels, analyse the contrasting textures found in her prose, especially in *Under the Net* and *The Bell,* and relate these techniques and textures to the novelist's essential achievement. The analysis of texture is detailed. I believe this is necessary, and I hope I have arranged it so that it need not appear tedious.

The four novels, written by the same hand within five years, about roughly similar kinds of contemporary people (all the major characters are educated and articulate) show very different techniques. *Under the Net,* despite its subtlety and its intellectual theme, is a simple narrative—a picaresque tale. The other novels are comparatively intellectual and static. They develop and explore situations. In *The Sandcastle* the events are subordinated to the display of character in action; in *The Flight from the Enchanter,* character in action is further subordinated to a moral theme. In neither of these novels is narrative, as such, important: the author is seen deploying certain resources to illuminate a given idea (the nature of power) or a developing situation (an eternal triangle), rather than unfolding a tale. This conscious deploying of resources is carried to extremes in *The Bell,* where there *is* a tale to unfold, but in part the narrative element is perverted, as I shall show, into a 'musical' play of motifs.

Fantasy is present in all four novels, but least in *The Bell.* In *Under the Net* some of the hero's adventures are barely credible, but they seem merely extravagant, not fantastic. The difference between the extravagant and the fantastic lies not so clearly in the events 'themselves' as in the tone in which they are described. Jake Donaghue's verve and self-deprecatory humour in telling of

[5] *Under the Net,* p. 83.

s exploits make them acceptable, however bizarre. But the uthor's own flat style does not do the same for the grotesque ehaviour of Mor's children in *The Sandcastle,* nor for Dora reenfield's 'witchcraft' in *The Bell.* Therefore in *The Sandcastle* ie behaviour of the two adolescents is to me fantastic and un-nteresting; and in *The Bell* the presence of the old bell in the lake, nd its discovery and raising, are fantastic, however precise the echanical engineering involved.

The fantastic element runs wild in *The Flight from the nchanter,* a very interesting and ambitious novel, which I have nalysed at length elsewhere.[6] An indecent photograph, taken ithout the subject's knowledge, a man with one blue eye and one rown, two brothers amiably sharing all their mistresses, are all antastic, but only unwillingly do they subordinate themselves to sychologically intelligible meanings (which the author *did* ntend). This unwillingness is because the technique is surrealistic: pparently unlikely phenomena are presented to the beholder by traightforward representational means; they are introduced as f the artist's intent were realistic. (In other words, the author writes lain prose, though not so plain as in the last two books.) But in act the writer's intent is allegorical: the unlikely phenomena stand or themes or psychological states the author wishes to explore. The style does not help us to realize this directly—we have to hink it out. The style or handling of the medium is not sub-rdinated to the total intention: it serves the characterization ut not the allegory. It never affords direct intuition of two levels t once. In *Under the Net* the style was subordinated consistently o the total intention, namely, the characterization of the hero nd the tracing of the progress of his soul.

The Flight from the Enchanter is essentially a work of the ntellect and the moral sense. The author has taken for her subject ot people, feelings and events, but moral ideas (such as the nature f power and of evil); and has taken for her medium not words, ut people, feelings and events. The real medium, prose—the words—is left to take care of itself, as prose by the writer of *Under the Net* could very well be expected to do. But this seems ow to have been an error, the beginning of that *neglect of the nedium* which has led gradually from the brilliant poetic texture f *Under the Net* to the clumsy prosaic texture of *The Bell.*

[6] In an article to be published in *Essays in Criticism* (Oxford), XI, No. 3, Oct. 1961, under the title 'Reviewer's Bane'.

In *Under the Net* the surrounding scenes are far more poetically rendered than in *The Sandcastle* or *The Bell.* Not only are the descriptions, especially of London and Paris, often attractive (an advantage not to be despised), but they are integral parts of the total emotional effect. For example, at a time of great nervous irritability, the quotidian appearance of the Goldhawk Road is distorted and infected by Jake's jaundiced view.[7] In the descriptions of the hospital building[8] there lurk, in apparently 'factual' information, images of rigidity and order which are beginning to make themselves felt in the hero's disorganized life. Descriptions not purely 'factual' like the boring topographical ones of St Bride's estate and Imber estate in the last two books, are used with success in *Under the Net.* Afterwards, it is as if Iris Murdoch became paralysed, just as Jake was for a while, by Hugo Bellfounder's view that

> almost everything one says, except things like "Pass the marmalade" or "There's a cat on the roof" turns out to be a sort of lie.[9]

Jake's creator, uncomforted by the famous words of Sir Philip Sidney's Apology: "Now for the poet, he nothing affirms and therefore never lieth," seems to have acquired an anxiety about lying even in her fiction. Whether through anxiety, or through that neglect of the 'mere' words that set in with the over-ambitious and intellectualized *The Flight from the Enchanter,* the narrator of *The Sandcastle* and *The Bell* tells us only about cats on the roof, and eschews poetic use of language.

Imagery also figures in this strange history of changing styles. There is a magnificent wealth of imagery in *Under the Net,* which gradually disappears from the novels, until figurative language in *The Bell* is rare. Perhaps imagery is not essential to novels, but it is often found in great fiction. With its aid, communication of complex meaning can be immediate and intuitive, and this is art. It occurs only at peak points in *The Bell,* but at many points throughout *Under the Net,* where tone and figure subserve the total intent in truly poetic fashion. Leaving aside the newly-minted

[7] *Under the Net,* p. 227.
[8] ibid. p. 241ff.
[9] ibid. p. 67.

roverbial sayings like "as snug as a pair of walnuts in their ıells,"[10] and the delightfully witty conceits like

> There are some parts of London which are necessary and others which are contingent,[11]

e turn to the abundance of seriously poetic imagery, and choose or lack of space) only one passage. An excellent comparison ccurs when Jake is sure he has found himself:

> Like a fish which swims calmly in deep water, I felt all about me the secure supporting pressure of my own life.[12]

y a feat of genuine imagination, human personality is here seen om the outside, as if a fish could describe how the life of its ody, constantly supported by the weight of water, differs from urs on land. Jake takes hold of a profoundly moral idea; and by lating a fish to man's highest concerns, the image is brilliantly reative. On the last day of his story, Jake looks at his writings ıd prepares to work on them:

> It was the first day of the world.
>
> It was full of that strength which is better than happiness, better than the weak wish for happiness which women can awaken in a man to rot his fibres. It was the morning of the first day.[13]

ı the fierce, alliterated sound and extravagant sense of this, one els the self-sufficiency and the superhuman emotional force of e artist, and believes that Jake wields that force.

In *Under the Net* the texture of the writing is as distinguished as ıe conception and the characterization. Innumerable positive chievements of expression greet the reader on every page, and ıere are no regrettable lapses. The change of style in the later ooks has been for the worse.

There is striking imagery in *The Flight from the Enchanter,* but so puzzling a book it cannot play its proper role of poetically ersuading the reader to adopt the author's emotional attitudes wards the scenes and characters. One exception, where the riter does communicate directly and persuasively, is the Polish others, the most successful characters in the book:

ibid. p. 10.
ibid. p. 26, and cf. p. 158.
ibid. p. 282.
ibid. p. 283.

> Jan was a slim and as fresh and as gay as a silk handkerchief passed through a ring.[14]

Notice the ingratiating rhythm of "as slim and as fresh and as gay."

> There were days when, contemplating the grace and vitality of her protégés, she [Rosa] felt as if she had received a pair of young leopards as a present.[15]

This comparison is well chosen, because the brothers later revealed other characteristics of wild animals besides grace and vitality. There are other comparisons which can only be interpreted (if at all) after careful study of the whole strange action of the novel. There are bold and striking similes about Rosa's relationship with Peter Saward[16] and with her brother[17]; the images are startling and portentous, but not clearly substantiated in the course of the novel. There are humorous comparisons about the Special European Labour Immigration Bureau[18] and about Annette,[19] but the humour does not determine the tone sufficiently clearly to show us that these are comic foils to the main action. Only close study can reveal this.

The boldest comparisons which occurred to the author's mind in planning this novel have leapt out of the *language*—out of the *medium* through which the story is transmitted—into the story itself. A character divided against himself (the gentle Mischa Fox, powerful owner of newspapers) becomes two characters, Mischa and Calvin. A vivid and shameful mental picture in Rosa's memory or Hunter's imagination, becomes a photograph taken by the wicked Calvin—an actual piece of sensitized paper, developed under exciting circumstances in a very real dark-room and with violent and moving results. This is not imagery but symbolism. The language is left to take care of itself. This seems now to have been neglectful.

In *The Sandcastle,* the third novel, we see a drastic retrenchment, both in total aim and the number of characters focussed upon. This study of a triangle is ruthlessly honest, sincerely imagined, deeply compassionate. But it is drab. The topographical descriptions are boring. Figurative or poetic language

[14] *The Flight from the Enchanter,* p. 44.
[15] ibid. p. 49.
[16] ibid. p. 39.
[17] ibid. p. 48.
[18] ibid. p. 191.
[19] ibid. p. 203.

ccurs only rarely; the comparison from which the title arose is arely alluded to in the novel. There are one or two direct, ioving images that express Mor's feeling for Rain:

> Mor looked at her, and he felt as if an enormous vehicle had driven straight through him, leaving a blank hole to the edges of which he still raggedly adhered.[20]

> He would not surrender Rain. The prospect of doing this . . . was like the prospect of cutting off his own arm at the shoulder with a blunt knife.[21]

ut little else in the texture of the writing arrests the reader's ttention or directs his responses.

In *The Bell,* although the author's understanding and com- assion are even more admirable, there is not enough invention, 1 the plot; and not enough poetry, in the language.

PART TWO

[Most of the footnotes in Parts Two and Three fulfil the author's intro- uctory promise "to demonstrate and discuss intellectual elements . . . and e handling of language" in Iris Murdoch's work. On account of their eater length, all footnotes of this nature have been marked with a ar and will be found printed at the end of the essay.]

The Bell is a novel of great psychological, moral and intellectual iterest.

It is an excellent study of religious and moral impulses in a ariety of characters. It is also a study, to my mind less successful, f a marriage that failed, between an art historian and one of his udents.

The husband, Paul, is unconvincing. His combination of quali- es is hard to imagine: he is staid, censorious, extremely un- racious in personal relations; he professes high standards of onduct, yet suffers from extreme jealousy *and* displays it with nbarrassing lack of reserve. The wife, Dora, receives more of e novelist's attention, but although the authoress attributes to er specific qualities—good looks of a particular kind, a vivid nagination, laziness, gaiety, spontaneity, sensuality, and an oundantly displayed incompetence in practical matters—yet one not persuaded that Iris Murdoch understands the Doras of this

The Sandcastle, p. 163.
ibid. p. 212.

world. (However, male readers seem to find Dora—and Annette, in *The Flight from the Enchanter*—satisfactory.) Unlike the other characters in *The Bell,* Dora has no distinctive kind of utterance.[22] If we could detect some significantly characteristic note in her conversation, the feckless, immature, inferiority-ridden art-student would come to life.

The central episode of the book is uninteresting. Dora and the schoolboy Toby discover an ancient bell submerged 300 years before in the lake beside the Abbey, and secretly raise it to astound the religious community by a miracle (or confound them with witchcraft) because, Dora resentfully feels, they disapprove of her and provoke her to a self-assertive act of revenge. This is sufficiently convincing only because we do not know Dora well enough to feel strongly about her, or about what extravagant things she might or might not do. By contrast, Toby's part in the raising of the bell is well motivated.

The figures of the Abbess and Catherine are sketched briefly but confidently. Margaret Strafford and James are excellently portrayed, Toby and Nick are beautifully imagined, and the central figure, the homosexual Michael, is an outstanding success —a man so blameless and so tortured that, although he is not unusually gifted or clever or likable, one suffers intense agonies with him and for him. Scarcely less of a marvel is the author's insight into the mind and soul of Toby, whom Michael fell in love with and kissed. The scenes between the two, in which Michael's love, unknown to himself, mounts to a climax, are described in detail, but are only moderately successful. Iris Murdoch's characters are often shown most clearly in solitude. The full and moving descriptions of the state of mind of each man, communing in misery with himself alone in between their happy and love-like meetings, are excellent. Here the author's infinite capacity for taking pains amounts indeed to genius.

Yet in this novel with its serious subject-matter and deep psychological and moral insight, invention is lacking, the construction is inartistic, and the style is a continual stumbling-block.

The construction of *The Bell,* though original and sophisticated, is yet inartistic. The method employed involves a false appearance of narrative. Especially in the early chapters, certain events at Imber, though masquerading as narrative, have been conceived

ot in a temporal sequence, but as 'musical' variations on a theme, ble to be offered in any order. Only after long study of *The Bell* oes one realize that the author has launched her tale by com- osing or constructing a sort of dry and economical fugue in rose, out of not very good materials.[23] By this method of con- truction, the narrative progression natural to prose fiction is ejected, and a subtler kind of cogency, based on imaginative ffects and their echoes, is aimed at. But poetry is lacking, so o subtle cogency, no echoes in the imagination, are achieved.

The author has built a coherent and economical structure— vhose coherence nobody suspects, and whose economy is partly here paucity of invention. Such a structure, whether a musical r a literary composition, should be built of poetic materials. It hould present a beautiful or knotty or emotionally-moving *urface,* to beguile or tease us into making closer acquaintance vith it, as a classical symphony or an Elizabethan verse-drama loes. The surface of *The Bell,* unlike that of *Under the Net,* is not oetic, and much of the earlier part of the book does not repay loser study. The style and construction are not as good as the haracterization.

Besides the fugue constructed to launch the story, the other nvention with which the author surrounds her characters is the state at Imber. *The Bell* suffers from a prosaic dullness in the lescription of the surrounding scenery which also marred *The andcastle.* Where too many sentences were required to do justice o the school and how it stood in the grounds and the district, vhole paragraphs are devoted to imprinting on our minds a plan f the estate of Imber, with the Palladian house, the Abbey, the ake, the causeway, the drive, the ferry and other features besides —all of which information a map could supply far better than vords. Only readers of detective stories, who aim to unravel the lot before the author does, need be bothered with such details. n this psychological novel they seem irrelevant and boring.[24]

At first reading, before the descriptions were anything but an ritation, the author's presentation of Michael and his relation- hips was a wonder of humaneness and understanding. It is still, fter I have grown familiar with the lay-out of Imber estate and orgotten it again. The author has imagined her scene clearly, ut has photographed her mental image instead of painting it. In

a creative work, she has strained prose to perform tasks appropriate to documentary film. At most, one could admit that the author's confidence in the physical surroundings may lend additional solidity to her characters who move among them, but then the language used about these invented scenes should not be simply a transparent medium, but contribute to the emotional significance of the events.

Not all the scenic description is completely prosaic. The gradual onset of winter at Imber is well rendered, and does contribute to the complex emotional quality of the scenes in which Dora and Michael (in such different ways) regain their grasp on life after the crises.

The style has other disconcerting features. Those parts of the narrative proper which are offered as exposition are weakly presented, although the 'histories' they supply do not fail to interest us. Invention seems to flag, and whereas in describing the landscape, trivial details are multiplied to bore us, in recounting past events the author does not provide enough details.[25] She seems to narrate as an intellectual, not a novelist; as one with an imperfect memory for gossip and no great interest in it—and so fails to move the reader. In the exposition of the past relationship between Michael and Nick, the narrator's careless diction[26] in no way accords with the subtle exploration which is to follow. Later the author does full justice to the fact that a basically physical love between two human beings allows of tremendous range between crudity and refinement, animality and spirituality, physical expression and sublimation. That these differences wavered before Michael's eyes (and Nick's and Toby's), sometimes appearing substantial, sometimes non-existent, mere self-delusion; that we share the characters' vacillation; that we judge James, who could not see any differences at all, to be nevertheless a valuable person—these things are the essence of the author's great achievement. But in part it remains an intellectual achievement, not fully realized in artistic terms. In some parts the style of the narration, or the *persona* of the author as narrator, sets up a barrier, so that only by careful study, and rarely by spontaneous delight, can one appreciate what has been achieved. The meaning intended is complex, but is not often conveyed by those quick, intuitive, comprehensive means appropriate to art.

25 *
26 *

Unsuitable diction is found at many points in the book, chiefly narrative passages,[27] but the style of the narration is not always sensitive;[28] many parts of the book *do* provide the spontaneous light and intuitive grasp of complex meaning which are the hallarks of art, and repay the closest scrutiny. The direct speech is ten very subtle. I have mentioned how the minor characters' ction portrays them. Many important speeches are excellently ritten, for example the speech Michael should never have made Toby,[29] and the three sermons. Nick's sermon[30] is a masterece. By its swift pace and searing passion it carries absolute nviction. Though we do not (at first reading) know Nick's otives, nor realize that he is near to suicide, yet we believe that e could have flayed Toby as he did; and though we feel for Toby, e can find no fault.[31]

When Nick is dead, the narration at last comes to life. A rceful rhythm and an element of rhetoric enter, which have een missing from the novels since the sentimental lines about iris in the 14th chapter of *Under the Net,* and were perhaps tentionally banished by the author. These poetic devices here ntribute to the expression of Michael's terrible grief, and to fining (what has so long been uncertain) the author's real standint towards Michael and his love for Nick:

> Wretchedly Michael forced himself to remember the occasions on which Nick had appealed to him since he came to Imber; . . .
>
> At first we can no more recognize *appeal* in Nick's off-hand, served yet provocative manner than Michael could. But it is ere. Closer study of the book can reveal it to us as memory uld reveal it to Michael.)
>
> . . . and how on every occasion Michael had denied him. Michael had concerned himself with keeping his own hands clean, his own future secure, when instead he should have opened his heart: should impetuously and devotedly and beyond all reason have broken the alabaster cruse of very costly ointment.[32]

In these last admirably emphatic lines, after heart-searching

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*

The Bell (London, 1958), p. 170ff.

bid. p. 259ff.

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The Bell (London, 1958), p. 311.

chapters of delicate, forbearing suspension of judgment by narrator and reader, we find a hint that the novelist endorses Michael's feeling that he should have done otherwise by Nick.

Throughout *The Bell* the novelist is alert to all the moral issues in the lives of her characters. Indeed they are the stuff of the book. But she only confronts us with them, or at most explores them; she does not pronounce on them, except perhaps that Dora was right to stay away from her husband. Many questions remain to trouble us: about the religious life, compared with the life just outside the Abbey wall; about the Abbess (is she as great a woman as she appeared to Michael?); about Catherine (in what does her "highly strung spirituality" consist?). What is the significance of the terrible failure of the lay community? If Michael failed Nick because of his aspirations to the priesthood, were these entirely misguided? What is the importance of the fact that Nick and his sister were so alike?[33] The central issue, homosexuality, is illuminated by the novel, but by no means 'treated'. When the author's clear understanding has played on it, and her life-like, sympathetic and morally valuable characters have acted on its dictates, it still looks as puzzling, disturbing and amoral as in fact it is. Perhaps this is as it should be. Yet the indecisiveness and inconclusiveness of the total novel is unsatisfying. Coupled with the prosaic flatness of the narration, the moral inconclusiveness has an effect too life-like to be artistic. To return to the pages of this book is as distressing as to receive visits and painful confidences from real friends and acquaintances in real difficulties. There is not sufficient artistry, not enough ease and skill for a reader to delight in, not enough mastery of a medium by an artist, to redeem the pain or make its presentation edifying; nothing to impose, between us and the human sufferings, a sufficient aesthetic distance.

The method of construction employed—the elaborate, economical 'musical' weaving of motifs which we have seen—might appear to refute this complaint of insufficient artistry. But because it is hard to detect, it is not artistic, only cerebral. It is ineffective through the same fault as besets the descriptions of Imber and many narrative passages—inept handling of the medium, disregard for the surface-texture. In Iris Murdoch's work the intellectual and the moralist threaten to oust not only the observer of

life at large, who may be expendable, but the stylist, who is not: if the art of the novel is properly understood, the stylist must be chief *aide* to the other three.

PART THREE

Iris Murdoch's work thus shows a growing disregard for her verbal medium (except where her imagination is kindled to white heat by her sympathy for her characters). In terms of her own psychological development, this seems to imply a gradual ascendancy of intellect over intuition in her viewing of the world through language: a progress from a 'verbalizing' to a 'conceptualizing' habit of mind. This is bound to be fatal to verbal art if the practitioner does not learn to achieve by conscious craft those effects formerly achieved intuitively. A great novelist is also a moral philosopher, but only through being a great verbal artist.

I believe that the intellectual's disregard for the surface is responsible not only for the drabness of texture in *The Sandcastle* and *The Bell,* but for the appearance of moral indecisiveness—a kind of moral 'neutralism'—which I find in *The Flight from the Enchanter* (a scintillating book, not at all drab), as well as in its successors. The same hopeless indecision as appears in *The Bell* about how the homosexually-inclined Michael should behave, is felt in *The Sandcastle* about the lives of Rain, Mor and Nan, and in the seemingly authoritative pronouncement by Calvin in *The Flight from the Enchanter:*

> You will never know the truth, and you will read the signs in accordance with your deepest wishes. That is what we humans always have to do. Reality is a cipher with many solutions, all of them right ones.[34]

By contrast, *Under the Net* ends in a triumphant moral victory, which is artistically no less valuable to the book than it was psychologically valuable to Jake Donaghue. Far from making a plea for 'art for morality's sake', my present argument rather recommends morality for art's sake, because if an intelligent novelist feels that something is valuable, he can move his readers to feel too. If he is too detached, if he will not feel—nor can they. Characterization and story-telling are hard to achieve without

[34] *The Flight from the Enchanter* (London, 1956), p. 304ff.

involving the feelings: an impression of a person or event cannot cross the gulf between one mind and another without a spark of feeling.

On the other hand, I wish also to pursue an argument of 'art for morality's sake' a stage further. In the last three books, nothing seems certain, no judgment seems valid. In *The Sandcastle* the narrator is so scrupulously fair that none of the three people in the triangle seems at all to blame: nobody dare infer that Nan could have prevented herself from growing so unpleasant as her married life proceeded (unpleasant, for example, in expressing her dislike of her husband's great friend Demoyte); or that her husband could have prevented her; nor that Mor could have succeeded better in inculcating his own regard for truth in his wayward children. In *The Flight from the Enchanter* the action is so presented that only with the greatest difficulty can we realize that Rosa Keepe was responsible for Nina's suicide by being discourteous, callously unresponsive and criminally self-absorbed. No impression any human being may have of the proper aims of human endeavour is allowed in these books to claim any validity or help its possessor more than poor Michael Mead in *The Bell* was helped by his various will-o'-the-wisp intuitions of the high purposes for which his God seemed to be reserving him.

Unwillingness to judge is one of the author's great virtues, yet the resulting impression is doubly unsatisfactory: it is too detached, and yet at the same time too pessimistic. One almost thinks that for Iris Murdoch "Reality is a cipher with many solutions, all of them *wrong* ones." The only hopeful thing the author sees is a certain animal resilience in very young people (Annette, Toby, Dora) not yet fully initiated into adult unhappiness. The pessimism is not simply a sober acceptance of reality. Underlying the three later novels seems to be a deeply melancholic and basically non-rational approach to human life. What was potentially distressing in *Under the Net* and rendered digestible by humour, has not been digested since (although most of the humour has gone) but figures as *evil*—as Calvin Blick or the gipsy man or the old tale of terrible events—and, accompanying the characters in their 'real' distresses, contributes melancholy to the pessimism. It is significant that the author seems free from any reliance on Freud for her understanding of human behaviour.[35] This independence

[35] *

is perhaps even valuable and (up to 1958) original, but it contributes to an insubordination of fantastic and irrational elements against the controlling moral intelligence which is so evident in Iris Murdoch, and which must, I believe, *rule* in a great novel.

These remarks about moral neutralism do not seem fair after a correspondence with the author in which she commented on her aims. This suggests that the fault is less in the aims than in the means employed to achieve them—the fault is in the expression. In the presence of the author's testimony,[36] the appearance of moral neutralism becomes a mere unfortunate *appearance*. On this view, the appearance of irrational melancholy may result from fantasy without beauty or wonder: fantasy not clothed in poetic language; again, the fault may not be in the conception but in the execution—in the expression. That the writer of *Under the Net* should find her powers of expression inadequate is strange, but has certainly been the case. One may reluctantly agree with Daniel George that "there can be nothing like it again" for its humour and light-heartedness, and the wide range of experience that seems to lie so close behind it; but verbal artistry can be studied and should be carried into Iris Murdoch's more serious work.

I hope to see Iris Murdoch in future novels find her powers of expression again adequate to her aims. I hope to see her again present her characters in fully-charged language, surround them with well-chosen 'lies' instead of sworn affidavits about cats on roofs, and lavishly invent for them convincing histories. And in her capacity as narrator of their histories, I hope to see her diction attain a precision and distinction that will consistently proclaim instead of obscuring her powers as psychologist, moralist and verbal artist.

It is unlikely that these aims relating to the texture of the writing and requiring the writer to be devoted and committed to every word, could be achieved in the actual presence of that chilling detachment about questions of value and morality which I find in the three later novels (and which makes the sufferings of the characters so painful) but which I do not find in Miss Murdoch's testimony about her work. Conversely, the impression of chilling detachment could disappear if the texture were different. It is no idle exaggeration to say that questions of value

and morality are decided, the writer's values are involved and detachment is negated, every time a writer of fiction invents a circumstance; every time he searches for the effective word, the well-chosen 'lie'; every time he rejects a blunted, debased or tasteless current usage that will not serve his unique and sharply apprehended purpose.

Only if these things are true, and if this interdependence of word, invention, feeling and value is properly administered by a novelist (whether intuitively or consciously), can a work of prose fiction be in its texture, as well as its structure, more significant than real-life gossip. Only so can a novel of contemporary life be a work of art. *Under the Net* is a good one, throughout; *The Bell* is a finer one, but only intermittently.

FOOTNOTES TO PARTS TWO AND THREE

[22] *Persons who speak in character.* Perhaps it is significant that Dora arranges her words in the wrong order:

> You like telling me unpleasant stories [She says to Paul] like the beastly one by De Maupassant about the dogs that you once made me read aloud. (p. 44):

or that she (or the narrator, impersonating her) disregards finer points of grammar:

> She liked Paul's friends though they alarmed her. They were all very clever and much older than her . . . (p. 9)

The minor characters *are* effectively distinguished by their utterance. The worldly affable bishop, the effete reporter Noel, the blunt, honest James, the obtuse and tactless Margaret—each speaks with his or her own kind of accurately selected *cliché* and typical phrase. (This is a refinement on the treatment of Dave Gellman or the Polish brothers, in the earlier books, whose unidiomatic English is so tellingly caught.)

[23] *Construction in The Bell.* There are two kinds of theme employed for the 'fugue': one is known to the author but not announced to the reader until the end (the two suicides and the unsuspected loves of Nick and Catherine for Michael). The other kind is invented by the author and offered to the reader early on, but not in sufficiently interesting form (the mediaeval legend). The legend is not poetic or moving, as presented by Paul to Dora. Imagine how this tale of an erring nun could have been built up by being embodied in a haunting poem, in the English of the period, discovered by Paul in a 14th century MS during his research. Or (less highbrow and donnish) as a local legend still alive, on the lips of a picturesque character from the village.

The legend, as prosaically retailed by Paul, is afterwards chopped up into 'motifs' of a bell, an ominous tolling, an unchaste nun, a young man climbing the walls of the 'enclosed' Abbey. But because the supposed mediaeval tale fails (like the gipsy in *The Sandcastle*) to grip our imagination, therefore the artifice whereby this legend is made to shape events at Imber until about Chapter 9, fails too.

Other motifs for the fugue are drawn from the themes not announced until their variations have been presented: they include fire-arms (p. 95ff, p. 301); Toby nude and exposed to erotic gaze (p. 77, p. 157); the

responsibility of Michael for Nick (p. 115, p. 311); the unwillingness of Catherine to enter the Abbey (p. 74, p. 139, p. 278ff).

Not only is the reader constantly among details whose significance he cannot *at the time* hope to assess, but he is deliberately misled by appearances; e.g. like Dora, we readers misinterpret the triangle between Dora, Michael and Toby (p. 78); similarly, we see Michael wonder if Catherine actively dislikes him (p. 208) but do not dream she is in fact in love with him. Such errors and wrong impressions may be life-like but are wasteful and inartistic in a novel, because to retain the impressions and relate them to the appropriate 'correct' revelations requires very detailed study of a long book. (Nevertheless, the author's understanding of how people's impressions take shape, is excellent, and shows to better advantage elsewhere: cf. Note 2.)

Even when the reader is not deliberately misled, he cannot remember the motifs nor make the required connections. For example there is no sense in Dora's having (at p. 74) a vision of Catherine as an unwilling novice, and thereupon walking fully shod into the stream. At best it can only help to show how impulsive and impractical Dora is. When she and Catherine plunge into the lake at p. 280, we have always forgotton p. 74, even at a third or fourth reading. An equally meaningless variation on the given material, masquerading as a significant event in the history of a character, is Michael's dream in Chapter 6. On the other hand, when Toby climbs the Abbey wall in Chapter 13, this is a highly meaningful variation on the legend, having abundant significance in Toby's own life, and a fixed place in his history.

To the author, the early appearances of her 'motifs' may have seemed like dramatic ironies, but for dramatic irony to take effect, the spectator must know more of the plot than the protagonists know. An author does. A student who has read the novel six times does. Other readers don't.

The complexity is wasted: it exists purely in intellectual, not in artistic terms.

[24] *Description of the surroundings in The Bell.* At the beginning of *The Bell,* when Dora, Toby and the reader are first shown the house and grounds, the description is confusing, but one does not at first resent it. Some of it is communicated by James, and if he appears a bore, perhaps this is what the author intends:

> "The lake is fed by three little rivers," said James, "which come into it at this end. Then there's one river leading out at the other end. Well, hardly a river, it seeps away through the marsh, actually." (p. 29)

And soon afterwards:

> "You can't see the far end of the lake from here," said James, "because it turns round to the other side of the house. The lake is shaped like an L, an L upside down from here, of course. The house is in the crook of the L." (p. 9)

Much more of prosaic detail is added by the author as Dora sees the grounds from her window, and while she is conducted round the estate by Margaret the next morning. We are even given Dora's first erroneous impressions of the lay-out and later corrections of them (p. 65), like the corrections James makes in the speeches quoted above. Every subsequent scene at Imber throughout an eventful summer is precisely localized, often so boringly that the reader takes no notice:

> Disembarked, they began to trail along to the right across the grass and into the woodland that lay between the lake and the main road and which was bordered at the far end by the high Abbey wall as it curved at right angles from the waterside. (p. 123)

[25] *Exposition of the past histories of the characters.* The account, in the pluperfect tense, of Toby's antecedents, is weak, especially in such phrases as ". . . his fairly recent confirmation . . ." (p. 46). The vagueness of "fairly recent" is offensive: a reader who is prepared to take an interest in Toby's history feels snubbed. Compare: "He had dived *a large*

number of times . . ." (p. 212, my itals); or this, where one feels that not only the author's invention has flagged, but the narrator's attention: Noel Spens is introduced into the exposition as

> . . . a young reporter, who was in fact a slight acquaintance of Paul's . . . (p. 11)

The phrase "in fact" is a meaningless expletive, and the stilted "a slight acquaintance" is equally unrealized.

[26] *Exposition about Michael and Nick.* The past history of Michael and Nick, absorbing though it is as gossip, is flawed by its diction. As it begins, "considerable" is the adjective which the detached and uninterested narrator employs (three times on one leaf, twice in one paragraph, p. 101-2) to describe Nick's attraction as a boy of fourteen, and Michael's "distress" in the conflict between his religion and his homosexuality: he feels "considerable" distress and "dreadful" guilt. The use of "dreary" in "a dreary tale of seduction" (p. 109) is not only careless but flippant, and damages the narrator in the reader's eyes.

[27] *The diction of the narrator in The Bell.* After frequent re-readings one sees that an attempt has been made, but not consistently, to employ in narrative passages the vocabulary of the character under consideration at the time. Thus just as "rebarbative" is Toby's word, so "dreary" is usually Dora's, and "considerable" is Michael's. But the general effect of this procedure is bad. There is no consistent narrator-*persona* to guide our responses to the story. The resulting texture is undistinguished and prosaic, even if the intention was 'dramatic'. Unlike a dramatist, a novelist, who may narrate as well as represent, need never be rendered inarticulate by inarticulate characters. If he wishes to deny his own consciousness and impersonate to tell his tale, it is probably wasteful for him to try to impersonate more than one character, except in direct speech. (*Under the Net* was an excellent impersonation of a highly articulate character.)

The narrator of *The Bell* is sometimes content with a *persona* inadequately groomed for public view. That adjective "dreary", as used by Michael and Nick (p. 109; see Note 26), or Noel and Dora (p. 190), can only be called 'Society slang'. The same applies to "desperately" in the phrase "desperately well cut," used with the humour in *Under the Net* (p. 193) about Madge's clothes when she went to Paris with a film magnate, but unfeelingly about the suit Catherine wore when Michael first saw her *(The Bell,* p. 111).

Phrases like the following seem to me tastelessly affected:

> . . . coy Victorian hunting prints . . . (p. 152)
> . . . quite a creditable spread was toward . . . (p. 241)
> . . . a delicious meal seemed to be pending . . . (p. 188)

The last represents a serious lapse. It is part of an unsuccessful scene between Dora and Noel in the latter's flat, where Noel's speeches are (as usual) excellently imagined, but the rest falls short. The supposed sybaritic quality of the improper scene in the bathroom, the supposed intoxication of the dance, the intended contrast with the austere and staid life at Imber, are not well conveyed, partly because of the diction. Dora was

> running the steamy water, pouring in the odoriferous bath salts, and seeking in the airing cupboard for a warm and downy towel. (p. 186)

Here the narrator has neither imaginatively entered Dora's enjoyment, nor held significantly (or even humorously) aloof. Like "pending", "odoriferous" and "seeking" are inept. Being affected they fix a gulf between the narrator and Dora, but fulfil no positive function. In Henry James's novels are comparable affectations of diction, but they are surer and more extravagant; they fix a far greater gulf between narrator and character, and mark the narrator off as a being so confidently remote from ordinary human concerns that his view of them is enhanced. For example, in *The Bostonians* Olive Chancellor says to her sister (Chapter 12):

"Your veil is not put on straight, Adeline."

"I look like a monster—that, evidently, is what you mean!" Adeline exclaimed, going to the mirror to rearrange the peccant tissue.

"Peccant tissue" is outrageously affected. But a significant contrast between a normal, uncritical conformity to fashion, and a superhuman objective view of the functon of dress in human behaviour, is offered to the reader in the contrast between a crooked veil and a "peccant tissue". In the absence of such enormous effrontery of diction, some explanation might be offered of the presence of bath salts in Noel's bathroom, and Dora could 'rummage' for her towel in the airing cupboard, or simply look for it.

[8] *Successful narration in The Bell.* A clumsy sentence like this:

This would in some ways be a better situation than what would have been the case if it had simply not occurred to her at all that she ought to give up her seat. (p. 16)

is followed by a neat and penetrating end to these thoughts on giving up one's seat, which makes the earlier clumsiness still more puzzling:

Dora hated pointless sacrifices. She was tired after her recent emotions and deserved a rest. Besides, it would never do to arrive at her destination exhausted. She regarded her state of distress as completely neurotic. She decided not to give up her seat.

She got up and said to the standing lady, "Do sit down here, please. I'm not going very far, and I'd much rather stand anyway." (p. 17)

There are other witty observations and juxtapositions, as when Dora realized that the service in the Chapel at Imber was in Latin:

She was dismayed and distinctly shocked. She had retained her prejudices when she lost her religion. (p. 33)

Certain strokes of invention by which the author presents a new character, especially one shown to the reader for the first time through the eyes of another, are admirable in their economy and suggestiveness. For example, Dora looked round the kneeling company in the Chapel at Imber when she first arrived and

. . . made out with an unpleasant shock a shapeless pile of squatting black cloth that must be a nun. (p. 33)

This rapid tracing of how impressions take shape, is excellent. Similar, on a larger scale and including speech as well as narration, are these lines soon after Toby first sees Nick:

"The great thing about a dog," said Nick, "is that it can be *trained* to love you." He leaned over the table to seize the neck of the whisky bottle, went slowly from the room, with Toby following, and began heavily to ascend the stairs, still hugging the dog against him, to a small landing with three doors.

"That's the bathroom," said Nick. "My room, your room." He kicked open the door and turned the electric light on with his elbow. (p. 56)

The reader, like Toby, gains a first impression incomplete but vivid. The significance of Nick's aloofness and of his remark about dogs is not fully realizable at first reading; there is much latent meaning, only appreciable on closer study. Nevertheless much is conveyed immediately: the picture of the careless, untidy, solitary-drinking young man, and his actions and manner in showing the newcomer Toby to his room (notice *leaned* over, *seize*, the *neck* of the bottle, the use of *boot* and *elbow*) is excellent, because completely imagined and presented in concrete detail.

[9] *Successful speeches in The Bell.* As good as the sermons, in its smaller way, is Noel's talk about the group at Imber, ending:

If people want to stop being ordinary useful members of society and take their neuroses to some remote spot to have what they imagine

are spiritual experiences I'm certain they should be tolerated but I see no reason why they should be revered. (p. 267)

As clues to the status of this judgment in the author's opinion, the word "neuroses", used here with such disparaging effect, seems important; and also the *pace*: in the context of the whole novel, nothing valid could be said with such pat fluency. Yet we are relieved to hear it said, because we partly share Noel's view. It needs saying.

[33] *Brother and sister in the novels.* In the tragic triangle of Michael, Nick and Catherine, the moral issue is seen from an odd angle, as is shown in the pointed, vulgar and (as it turns out) ironic remark when Michael first sees Catherine:

> It might be thought that since Nature by addition had defeated him of Nick, at least by subtraction it was now offering him Catherine: but this did not occur to Michael . . . (pp.110-11)

He did not find Catherine attractive:

> He found her, as he found all women, unattractive and a trifle obscene, and the more so for so cunningly reminding him of Nick. (p. 111) (This is excellent.)

But she, poor woman, fell in love with him, and in her guilt at so tarnishing her soul at the time of its preparation for entering the Abbey, she attempted suicide and succumbed to a grave mental illness.

Poignant though their resemblance was for Michael, who loved Nick, the brother and sister were surely not interchangeable objects for falling in love with, nor equivalent (as the remark above seems to imply) for all purposes other than the biological. I think that Iris Murdoch's preoccupation with brothers and sisters similar or close to each other is excessive: it is seen also in *The Flight from the Enchanter* and *The Sandcastle.* The question of how difference of sex affects the two human beings most alike in the world, is an interesting one in its genetic, cultural and moral implications, but I think that brothers and sisters as close as the ones in these novels are rare and unlikely. Family life does not usually work like that.

[35] *Iris Murdoch and Freud.* See *The Bell,* p. 80; *The Flight from the Enchanter,* p. 257; *The Sandcastle,* p. 234. The last is the most nearly respectful allusion to psychoanalytical concepts.

[36] *Iris Murdoch's judgments on her characters* are more decisive than the novels themselves convey; e.g. she writes about *The Bell*:

> . . . "alabaster cruse" stuff is what I really meant.

and about *The Flight from the Enchanter*:

> I don't think I endorse Calvin Blick's view about "all right solutions," etc. Calvin is the existentialist devil, the devil of pure reflection. One must flee from him too.

TECHNIQUE AND FEELING IN JAMES JOYCE'S *A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN*

A. G. WOODWARD

JOYCE'S novels raise certain basic problems to do with the function of the artist in society and with the responsibility of the artist towards the content of his work. As this essay arose out of a talk on *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* in a series given at the University of Cape Town on "The Dilemma of Man in the Modern Novel", I have restricted myself mainly to that work, but have expanded the argument so as to take some account of *Ulysses.*

It is remarkable that, among the modern novelists who are his peers—Lawrence, Conrad, Forster—Joyce alone wrote a book to make clear how important this fact of being an artist was. Such an 'aesthetic' emphasis does not, of course, preclude an awareness, on Joyce's part, of the spiritual dilemmas of the modern mind; the *Portrait,* after all, is about Joyce's own rejection of all moral, social, and spiritual traditions, and his going out, rootless, "to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race." Setting aside, for the moment only, the grandiloquent tone of this, its meaning I take to be as follows: that the artist is a special being who not only has the power of re-creating experience and thereby keeping it fresh and significant, but who can also keep alive humanity's awareness of certain archetypal patterns that would otherwise be submerged in the indifferent flux of time. Thus Art is a sacrament, and the Artist a kind of secular priest. If one allows, on the strength of such an attitude, that Joyce cannot be wholly accounted for as a sterile aesthete, it is nevertheless true that he is still an inordinately *conscious* artist. So true is this that he himself actually said "with me, the matter is always simple, everything is in the shaping;" and furthermore, T. S. Eliot, a highly sympathetic critic, said this: *"Ulysses* . . . tells us nothing."

This implies, I suppose, that Joyce's works often impress, not so much as profound moral statements about experience, as dazzling technical manipulations of experience. Thinking of *Ulysses,* even more of *Finnegans Wake,* one feels the justice of that.

Now this quality of Joyce's work, the consciously 'artful' quality, is just as much in evidence in the *Portrait* as in his two later novels. The *Portrait* is the story of how Joyce became this 'Artist'—Stephen's story is, in all essentials, Joyce's own. And the telling of such a story must have set, for such a writer, a very special problem.

Joyce had, more than most writers, strong ideas about the artist's being 'impersonal', 'objective', of the artist's duty to stand, as he puts it in the *Portrait,* "beyond or behind or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails." It sounds formidable, and the fact that he *was* so devoted to 'objectivity' has suggested to some critics that he had a lot to conceal—that he had more than his fair share of obsessions, tics, and fixations to transmute into the 'impersonality' of art, and more than usual difficulty in achieving it. And it is remarkable, in a book such as *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake,* the way one will find beneath layer after layer of symbol and stylization, the simplest family situations, the simplest emotions, along with a lot of personal memories and grudges. Such a process does suggest that Joyce had to work very hard, and very 'artfully', to disguise his personal involvement in his work. It suggests that his ideal of 'impersonality' is not that of a mature intellectual control over an ever-richening awareness of the fullness of life (as Leavis's seems to be), but a sterilization of the obsessively personal in the formal discipline of art; something rather closer to Eliot's ideal, ambiguously stated though that is.[1]

Hence one can see what a great problem the writing of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* must have set him: it was an intensely personal experience, the story of how he became what he most passionately wished to become. How was he to keep at the right distance of finger-nail paring frigidity in re-creating the experience? There is fascinating evidence of the bother it caused him in *Stephen Hero,* where Joyce told Stephen's story by means of the straight third-person narrative, in which he himself was

[1] See Vincent Buckley *Poetry and Morality* (London, 1959), where Eliot's emphasis on impersonality is said to contain overtones of escape from emotion as well as of a necessary aesthetic 'distancing'.

early and embarrassingly identified with Stephen's priggishness nd immaturity. In other words the experience is insufficiently stanced, raw; and if there was one thing in which Joyce was nsurpassable it was in his ability to disguise raw personal xperience in a dazzling sauce of parody, internal monologue, direct narration and general stylistic high-jinks. The spicier it ot, the more 'objective' he felt he was; the high point of bjectivity being, I suppose, *Finnegans Wake,* where he not only efined himself out of existence, but most potential readers as well.

The main impression of the *Portrait,* as of *Finnegans Wake* and *lysses,* is of a stylistic feat; so I propose to look first at the urpose of that virtuosity, and then at the experience which it rojects—or *disguises.*

I use that word again because the reason for the stylization of xperience one finds in Joyce seems to be this: he was a man *bsessed* with his own past, who lived intensely in it and remembered it all: so that when, in *Stephen Hero,* he tried to draw the ortrait of himself, the Artist, as a young man, he felt very rightly hat he had not sufficiently disguised his own anguished involvement in it: he found that, without meaning to, he had high-lighted he chip on his shoulder. Hence in the *Portrait* he evolved a echnique by which he could render the experience very vividly nd intimately, but which would absolve Joyce himself from being ompletely identified with the immaturity and exalted Romanticism f Stephen.

Joyce describes the various stages of Stephen's growth in prose hich mimics or parodies the different qualities of his experience om childhood to young manhood. It misses the point to say, s some critics do, that the passages describing Stephen's dolescence are romantically over-written. They are intended to e so, and Joyce knows exactly what he is doing when he writes passage like the following:

> He wandered up and down the dark slimy streets peering into the gloom of lanes and doorways, listening eagerly for any sound. He moaned to himself like some baffled prowling beast. He wanted to sin with another of his kind, to force another being to sin with him and to exult with her in sin. He felt some dark presence moving irresistibly upon him from the darkness, a presence subtle and murmurous as a flood filling him wholly with itself. Its murmur besieged his ears like the murmur of

some multitude in sleep; its subtle streams penetrated his being.[2]

It is a parody technique: it gives the inwardness of the experience, as it might seem to Stephen had he described it at that stage of his life, but in its exaggeration it is a warning light to the reader not to take it at its face value. Joyce has provided himself with a kind of built-in irony, by which the experience can be seen with apparent objectivity and yet remain vividly personal, or lyrical. Before saying any more about the value of this trick, let me first briefly enumerate, in order, the prose textures that mirror the stages of Stephen's development.

The opening few pages mimic the experience of Stephen as a very small child. The prose gives only flat, vivid, undifferentiated sensuosity; analysis of experience is at a minimum. It is clever but it is possible, I think, to be too impressed by this kind of thing —after all, Dickens could make us see through childhood's eye without all this tricksiness.

Next, a young schoolboy, still mainly a vessel of sensuous impressions, but trying now to arrest and define them, as well. This emphasis is very important in the evolution of Stephen as an artist. Then, at the vital stages of adolescence, the prose becomes enervated, dreamy and rather abstract. This prepares us for the high-pitched incantations of the prose describing his *débâcle* with sex, which in turn precipitates an equally emotive religious hysteria. The Jesuit father's Retreat Sermon is the high-point of the book's stylistic virtuosity. (It is too long, of course; Joyce's zest for parody ran away with him, as it did in the Oxen of the Sun section of *Ulysses.)* After the sermon, Stephen's experience is recorded for a while in pages loaded with incense (he nearly becomes a priest) but the rapturous vision of the girl on the beach confirms him in another calling, with its own sacraments.

The tone of that key passage, particularly, has aroused hostile comment, because, even in that moment of the Artist's initiation Joyce has not hesitated to record the experience in very Romantic Shelley-like terms; but this passage too is a kind of sympathetic mimicry of the young Artist's first communion, necessarily a moment of immature exultation, which the prose reflects, but by its very exaggeration, judges.

After that passage (I will deal with its doctrinal significance later) we go straight into the university sections, where the prose becomes sharp, clean, cold; Stephen is committed now, no

[2] *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London, 1956), p. 102.

andering in a maze of undirected emotions. The austere precision f these passages, where Stephen defines his aesthetic creed, is llowed by the concluding section where Joyce gradually heightens ie tone again, so that the book ends on a note, not of lush bad omanticism like the early parts, but definitely of exalted pride, hich is not *totally* dissimilar in tone to the other parts of the ook:

> Mother is putting my new secondhand clothes in order. She prays now, she says, that I may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels. Amen. So be it. Welcome O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.[3]

That famous ending brings me to the point where the techniques f Joyce cease to be just vivid and lyrical and become irritatingly mbiguous. Is that last passage being seen ironically by Joyce or ot? Is Joyce at the last identified with his *alter ego* hero? On the vidence of the techniques used in the rest of the book one would ay, 'No': on the other hand the passage is not so unambiguously xaggerated as the earlier passages—it is even genuinely moving; ut it is, also, still rhetorical and romantic. There is no way f making a final judgment, because Joyce has covered his tracks o cleverly it is impossible to be sure whether Stephen's *total* xperience, in the book, is being seen objectively or not. What ne can be sure of, however, is that it is a sign of uneasiness on oyce's part as to whether he can see his own experience bjectively.

Hence one must feel, I think, that the whole strategy is basically n evasion of creative responsibility; a trick of focus whereby xperience can be rendered very vividly, very 'lyrically', but which bsolves Joyce himself from any unambiguous commitment to it, r from any overt judgment on it. Before seeing how these same echniques are used on a much larger scale, and with the same esults, in *Ulysses,* I want to look more closely at the Artist's role n the *Portrait,* assuming, as I think one can, that Joyce *is* ulti- nately identified with its grandiose implications, in spite of the echniques of concealment used.

A good passage for bringing out the theme of the Artist's ejection of the values of his society occurs when Stephen and his

[3] ibid. p. 257.

father go to Cork and meet an old man who reminisces with Mr Dedalus on the family's history. The sly comradeship of their talk is beautifully caught, and here Joyce reverts to the bare naturalistic method of *Dubliners;* his mimicry of ordinary speech is his special, incomparable gift, but the gift, in his case, one might hazard, of a defensive temperament, incapable of any rich, full grasp of others or of himself, but adept at playful, cruelly revealing 'take-offs'. (It is profitable to talk of *Ulysses* in this light, too, as I hope to show.) The sense of tradition in the two men's talk evokes in Stephen very different reactions, rendered by a stylized Romantic prose. He is compared to the moon in Shelley's poem, a wanderer among alien things and people which in this book are: the Home, the Nation, and the Church. And on the evidence with which they are presented who can blame Stephen? Think of the rancorous, inconclusive squabbles over Parnell, and the progressive horrors of genteel poverty; think of the whole snarling, muddled atmosphere of Irish Nationalism; think finally of the whole atmosphere of Irish Catholicism, its hysteria, its unctuous intensity, and its rancid parochialism—even though there is good reason to feel that there were aspects of Catholicism that Joyce never shook off. Presented thus, one can sympathize with Stephen's rejection, in the name of that vision granted him on the beach and towards which he had been obscurely feeling his way throughout the whole book.

We see the first significant stage of his vocation in the schoolboy sections:

> Eileen had long white hands. One evening when playing tig she had put her hands over his eyes: long and white and thin and cold and soft. That was ivory: a cold white thing. That was the meaning of *Tower of Ivory.*[4]
>
> And all over the playground they were playing rounders and bowling twisters and lobs. And from here and from there came the sound of the cricket bats through the soft grey air. They said: pick, pack, pock, puck: little drops of water in a fountain slowly falling in the brimming bowl.[5]

There are comparable passages in all these early sections and their significance is this: Stephen is the archetypal 'outsider', sensitive, watchful, apart; we see him sip at experience, roll it on

[4] ibid. p. 37.
[5] ibid. p. 42.

is tongue, and *define* it. Such moments of definition, when "the ommonplace reveals itself to the artist," were called by Joyce epiphanies' and they are accompanied by a vertiginous sense of *ower* over experience. Frustration and thwarted power in real ife drive Stephen into solitude, but that solitude engenders for the rtist a compensating power, besides which *all* other gratifications re quite inadequate to satisfy his pride. And pride, I think, is ne's dominant impression of Stephen as the book goes on, a pride vhich can only be consummated by a total, triumphant dedication o Art. I say 'consummated' intentionally; both the sexual and the eligious connotations of the word are in place, I think, because his is a sense in which, for Stephen, Art is seen as taking the lace of both activities. A rising rhythm of pride can be traced in he three climactic episodes of the book: the unjust beating and he appeal to the Rector at the end of Section I; the encounter with he prostitute and the relapse into religion (here pride loses irection); and the encounter with the young girl on the beach. et us look briefly at each of these in turn.

Stephen is unjustly beaten with the pandy-bat in class, by ather Dolan. Stephen's outraged sense of justice and the awed ncouragement of the other boys impel him to complain to the ector: he is terrified, but there is still no mistaking the upsurge f pride and power in the passage that describes him walking efiantly to the Rector's room:

> He had reached the door and, turning quickly up to the right, walked up the stairs and, before he could make up his mind to come back, he had entered the low dark narrow corridor that led to the castle. And as he crossed the threshold of the door of the corridor he saw, without turning his head to look, that all the fellows were looking after him as they went filing by.
>
> He passed along the narrow dark corridor, passing little doors that were the doors of the rooms of the community. He peered in front of him and right and left through the gloom and thought that those must be portraits. It was dark and silent and his eyes were weak and tired with tears so that he could not see. But he thought that they were the portraits of the saints and great men of the order who were looking down on him silently as he passed: saint Ignatius Loyola holding an open book and pointing to the words *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam* in it; saint Francis Xavier pointing to his chest; Lorenzo Ricci with his

> berretta on his head like one of the prefects of the lines, the three patrons of holy youth—saint Stanislaus Kostka, saint Aloysius Gonzago and Blessed John Berchmans, all with young faces because they died when they were young, and Father Peter Kenny sitting in a chair wrapped in a big cloak.[6]

The tone is perfect here: it has a muted irony—this is, after all, just a resentful frightened small boy; and the Rector's tone of cool amused authority when Stephen has had his say is exactly right and 'places' Stephen beautifully. *But* Stephen has made his point: he has asserted himself, he has defied authority, and when he comes down the prose reflects the calm, cathartic glow that Stephen has won by means of this assertion. Most significant of all, this episode, and the whole first section of the book, ends with a reiteration of that satisfying definition or epiphany Stephen has made earlier:

> The fellows were practising long shies and bowling lobs and slow twisters. In the soft grey silence he could hear the bump of the balls: and from here and from there through the quiet air the sound of the cricket bats: pick, pack, pock, puck: like drops of water in a fountain falling softly in the brimming bowl.[7]

The significance lies in the fact that the feeling of power which Stephen experiences by the proud assertion of his will is brought into sharp conjunction with the feeling of power that the embryonic artist obtains from the re-creation of experience in words. By the end of the book these two feelings will have coalesced and Stephen will defy all his cultural and spiritual traditions in the name of this 're-creative' power. His way is not clear yet; he will still have to force himself through a tangle of sex and religion before he achieves his total proud isolation: but this passage is the first major unambiguous statement of the nascent artist's power.

The second climax of the book's action is the encounter with the prostitute, and the subsequent religious remorse; they must be taken together, I think, and be seen as twin red-herrings which distract Stephen from his true calling. As an adolescent obsessed by sex he lives in a dream-world of ideal Romance on the one hand, and of riotous mental orgies on the other. Lurid reality precipitates him back into the arms of the Church. The over-

[6] ibid. p. 57.
[7] ibid. p. 60.

vrought prose of both these sections vividly reflects and at the ame time ironically comments on the total disorientation. He is lmost tempted into taking orders by one of those sly Jesuits who, very shrewdly, reveals to him the *power* that resides in a priest's ffice: but Stephen is 'saved' from this, he 'sees the light'—the netaphors of salvation are reversed in Stephen's career: it is eligion which is the temptation, art the 'true calling'—in a lonely valk by the sea-shore, when he sees a young girl with her skirts ilted up. The tone of this episode, as I mentioned earlier, is eculiarly Shelleyan and exalted: one must take it, I think, not as ad writing on Joyce's part, but as a phase of his sympathetic arody of Stephen's experiences: and here it conveys the tremulous cstasy of a young immature writer's self-dedication. The moment s a supreme epiphany in itself:

> She was alone and still, gazing out to sea; and when she felt his presence and the worship of his eyes her eyes turned to him in quiet sufferance of his gaze, without shame or wantonness. Long, long she suffered his gaze and then quietly withdrew her eyes from his and bent them towards the stream, gently stirring the water with her foot hither and thither. The first faint noises of gently moving water broke the silence, low and faint and whispering, faint as the bells of sleep, hither and thither, hither and thither; and a faint flame trembled on her cheek.
>
> Heavenly God! cried Stephen's soul in an outburst of profane joy.
>
> He turned away from her suddenly and set off across the strand. His cheeks were aflame; his body was aglow; his limbs were trembling. On and on and on and on he strode, far out over the sands, singing wildly to the sea, crying to greet the advent of the life that had cried to him.
>
> Her image had passed into his soul for ever and no words could break the holy silence of his ecstasy. Her eyes had called him and his soul had leaped at the call. To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life! A wild angel had appeared to him, an angel of mortal youth and beauty, an envoy from the fair courts of life, to throw open before him in an instant of ecstasy the gates of all the ways of error and glory.[8]

What are the implications of this passage? One notes again, the

[8] ibid. p. 175.

transference of religious imagery to a secular use: Stephen is uttering an ecstatic apostolic blessing on life, but life seen as *material for the artist,* and nothing else. The passage is also, remember, an extended sexual image: this life to which he triumphantly dedicates himself is seen as a young girl who "suffers his gaze." I think one should note the emphasis—'his gaze' not 'his embrace'—because it tells us that the artist is deeply involved in life, but always, too, a little outside it, watching, impersonal. Almost a kind of voyeur, one might say, but not sterile as a voyeur is, because from the encounter of the artist's gaze with reality a new creation emerges. Hence the tone of the whole passage is a mixture of the orgasmic and the mystical; Art is seen as an analogy of, and a substitute for, both the religious and the sexual emotions, which, at the price of social isolation, grants individual power.

But is it *just* that? I should like to look, in conclusion, at the last 'University' section of the book, where Stephen elaborates this epiphany into an aesthetic creed, for his bawdy student friends. One might condense it thus: for the artist to achieve his exalted purpose successfully the following conditions are necessary. First, he must be impersonal, 'objective': art may begin with a personal lyric cry, pure 'subjectivity', but it must go beyond that, and encompass all varieties of experience—and this provokes the famous remark about the artist "beyond and above his work paring his fingernails." We have already seen how Joyce tried to achieve a double effect of intense personal lyricism as well as objectivity in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* The second condition, if the artist is to succeed, is that his art should be, as a result of his impersonal moulding of experience, what Joyce calls non-kinetic; it should waken neither desire nor loathing, but create a pure aesthetic state. This is elaborated into the final condition: that the artist must be able to divine in the world around him, and re-create in his work, three essential qualities, which Joyce defines in three Latin terms that Stephen lifts from St Thomas Aquinas: *Integritas* (wholeness), *Consonantia* (the 'harmony' of the parts in relation to the whole), *Claritas* (the 'radiance'. the 'whatness' of anything). This sounds very impressive, and it is meant to. On inspection, what they seem to mean is that the artist should be able to render the essential 'thisness' of things, should be able to intuit the unique quality of each and every experience,

nd to transmute it into the spiritual medium of art. Hence, nything is grist to the artist's mill, if he can make it significant, ealize' it. An artist's task, to use Joyce's own terms, is a con-nuous search for 'epiphanies' ("signatures of all things I am here o read," Stephen says when he reappears in *Ulysses);* an ex-erience becomes sacramental at his touch.

This certainly sounds very much an Aesthetic attitude—a mix-ure of Hopkins's inscape and of Walter Pater's exquisite moments; ut I doubt if Joyce could have meant just that.[9] He must, in is own way, have envisaged some kind of social and moral ignificance for art, even if, on analysis, his own art does not ave that significance. He must have meant something of the ind I adumbrated earlier: that art is continually renewing life, eeping it fresh, and the artist reveals, in the process, certain ternal, vital patterns of feeling, 'archetypal' patterns. How else an one take Stephen's phrase: "to forge in the smithy of my soul he uncreated conscience of my race"? But justify Joyce as one nay, in this manner, against the accusation of pure aestheticism, e is still making an enormous claim: the Artist, in his re-creating f experience, is not only satisfying his own sense of power over xperience, he is also uncovering the fruitful myths by which alone umanity can live—*he is making history significant,* since there s now no spiritual orthodoxy that can do it for us.

So, Joyce does what one would expect Stephen to do, he writes book like *Ulysses,* which is an attempt to re-define what is niversally and eternally human in the squalid particulars of nodern urban life—an attempt to make modern life heroic and neaningful. Hence the *Odyssey* parallels, which are not *totally* ronic, like T. S. Eliot's use of classical parallels; Molly Bloom s not just a vulgar, blowsy woman, but a symbol, as well, of the ternally fecund life of Nature; nor is Bloom just a seedy, pathetic ttle man, but a symbol of all men of good will, and cast, ndirectly, in the heroic mould. In this way, Joyce tries to crush own the significance of all human history into one Dublin day, ust as in *Finnegans Wake* he tries to do the same thing for one)ublin night.

Not, of course, that the artist's contemplation of experience is necessarily 'aesthetic' in any derogatory sense. The 'culture of the feelings' can be profoundly moral both for the artist himself and for those who participate in his experience. One has only to think of Wordsworth, or of Hopkins himself. Stephen's definition of the artist's function here (and Joyce's own similar definition in the Paris and Pola Notebooks) has, however, disconcerting overtones of 'Ninetvish' self-sufficiency.

In *Ulysses* Joyce uses a doggedly naturalistic method, but it is supremely important that we should sense the mystical, symbolic pattern in the workaday detail of the carpet. One might put it like this: that *Ulysses* is made up of innumerable tiny, banal epiphanies all coalescing to form one big epiphany, the book itself—which, in its all-inclusiveness, is an analogy of God's creation. Joyce is trying to be *God,* let alone a high-priest—that is what his claims for Art and the Artist really amount to. Art alone can synthesize experience into some all-embracing pattern of spiritual significance, of a kind, for example, that it had in the Middle Ages. Such an aim has been cited as evidence of how Joyce never really shook off his Catholicism, and certainly *Ulysses* does bear some resemblance, in its elaborate pattern of cross-referring symbols and 'significances', to a kind of secular *Summa;* but it is a *Summa* with its roots in a Romantic/Symbolist tradition of the artist's power to create an autotelic world, and as such it can be seen as a supreme example of the modern writer's Angelism, or spiritual pride (Rilke, Mallarmé and Proust are the obvious analogies).

One's reaction to Joyce's claim for Art and the Artist will depend a good deal on one's opinion of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake.* It is possible to make out a case for *Ulysses* being a great moral experience, a great *affirmation* of eternal verities, and hence to feel that its elaborate aesthetic structure is justified. On the other hand it is equally possible to feel that its moral depth is minimal or perverse, and that by his technical virtuosity Joyce attempted to disguise his involvement in the material, just as he could be said to have disguised his attitude to Stephen's Romantic egoism.

In *Ulysses* Joyce splits himself into two *personae:* the same Stephen Dedalus, and Leopold Bloom, who, as Wyndham Lewis pointed out in *Time and Western Man,* is clearly the other side of "his talented Irish author." (Richard Ellmann, in his new biography of Joyce, confirms the insight.) Joyce's technique of dramatization is carried a step further in *Ulysses* than it has been in the *Portrait,* however: the reader is almost completely sunk in Bloom's fluid consciousness, with a bare minimum of external 'personal' comment by the author. Stephen's consciousness is similarly rendered in Chapter III, with a prose of gnarled, bitter intellection substituted for Bloom's sensuous staccato; but in other sections Joyce presents him by means of a rather uneasy mingling of third-person

narrative and soliloquy, and it is in these sections, as Wyndham Lewis again points out, that Joyce is still unable to conceal a deep, disconcerting *rapport* between himself and the huffy, priggish egoism of his Stephen. It hints at the tone of *Stephen Hero* again, and we have seen at what pains Joyce was to correct and conceal that tone in the *Portrait*.

Nevertheless, though the characterization of Stephen is still open to the charge of showing a shaky objective grasp, it is still true that in the scheme of the book he is intended to seem immature in relation to Bloom, the necessary father-figure whom he seeks. Such an emphasis on the satisfactoriness of Stephen in the *pattern,* the *scheme,* is significant. An enormous amount of Joyce's energy went into that, and viewed as a pattern, in the abstract, the Bloom/Stephen *rapprochement* seems adequate; but when one thinks of the significance that Bloom is intended to have, in that pattern, and contrasts the intention with the actual texture and feeling of the sections in which his consciousness speaks for him, one has the feeling that Joyce's touch is a little ambiguous.

Bloom is the mature person, the man of good will on a 'heroic' scale, to whose career the classical parallels are not just ironic; he has sense and sensibility; he is as "integral as a flower,"[10] etc. Such has been the 'Party Line' about Bloom, stemming from what Joyce told Stuart Gilbert (though he also told someone else, in a different mood, that there was "not a single serious line in the whole book"). There has been a similar 'Party Line' about the effect of the book as a whole; it is taken as a great 'yea-sayer', an affirmation of the glory through the boredom and the horror. Such a judgement can only be reached, to my mind, by isolating words and sentences, and seeing them as part of a scheme, and by refusing to submit to the actual effects of the Bloom prose, which, so far as its torrent of matter allows Bloom to achieve life of any kind, gives him life of a comic-pathetic kind. As a technique for rendering a character more lifelike it is, of course, tendentious; it suggests that the essence of the ordinary man's mind is a wry, sad, random, dirty-minded, compulsive associativeness. One sees the elements of truth in such a judgement, but the point is this: that to render it thus to the prolonged, gargantuan extent that Joyce does is a comic technique, a *parody;* and by its patient accumulation of detail it swells banality to comic-heroic propor-

[10] Richard Ellmann *James Joyce* (New York, 1959).

tions—which is not quite what the orthodox account would convince us is Joyce's intention.

So, too, with Molly Bloom. The lusts and trivia of a vulgar woman's mind swell, unpunctuated, to proportions that make her a figure of monstrous comedy, rather than a Mother-figure, a Gea Tellus. Her soliloquy is an enormous, grinding *tour de force*—and that quality should make one suspicious of its health—which establishes, in a different tonality, the same point as the Bloom sections: that ordinary life is a meaningless accumulation of the sensual, the sordid and the banal. Joyce's true Penelope was Flaubert.

I know that Joyce intends Molly Bloom as a paradox and that it is precisely from the depths of the vulgar and the trivial, which are the gauge of its authenticity, that affirmation must come. Such was his intention with Bloom, too; it is the *donnée* of the book. What I would emphasize, however, is that if Joyce does achieve any kind of affirmation, it is only in the form of a perverse and self-defeating paradox, and that the basic tone and feeling of the book, particularly of its central character, Bloom, is of the kind I have summarized. Evidence to the contrary is usually sought by taking a sentence or two from the flux of Bloom's consciousness and saying: "What sensitivity! What perception! Bloom is a poet," etc.

> Sodom, Gomorrah, Edom. All dead names. A dead sea and a dead land, grey and old. Old now. It bore the oldest, the first race. A bent hag crossed from Cassidy's clutching a naggin bottle by the neck. The oldest people. Wandered far away over all the earth, captivity to captivity, multiplying, dying, being born everywhere.

What we have here, of course, is the plangent, keening lyricism of Joyce himself, applied to Bloom's mind, but quite alien to the total impression that mind creates, and incapable of sustaining itself against the weight of matter around it.

One might conclude thus: Joyce sinks himself in the consciousness of his characters and mimics each inimitably; think, quite apart from the three central figures, of that gallery of Dubliners swollen to grotesque proportions by the baroque savagery of Joyce's parody—Gertie McDowell, Mrs Purefoy, The Citizen. There emerges, through these layers of parody, a total single effect of bitter *taedium vitae* (one sees why T. S. Eliot felt able

to congratulate Joyce on the orthodoxy of his sensibility), vitalized by a cruel and playful stylistic virtuosity: a very personal vision, in fact, in spite of the indirections of the narrative technique, which, as in the *Portrait,* are brilliant, distracting tactics for avoiding full personal involvement.

HEYWOOD'S *A WOMAN KILLED WITH KINDNESS*

A. G. HOOPER

In his essay on Thomas Heywood, originally published in 1931, T. S. Eliot gives a very just estimate of Heywood's ability. But Eliot makes three statements which deserve further examination. They are the following, and it is to the third that I wish to give most attention:

1. What is perhaps clumsy is the beginning superfluously by a scene directly after the marriage of the Frankfords, instead of by a scene marking the happiness of the pair up to the moment of Wendoll's declaration.
2. Middleton's *The Changeling,* in every other respect a far finer play, must share with *A Woman Killed with Kindness* the discredit of having the weakest underplot of any important play in the whole Elizabethan repertory.
3. This theme—a man ready to prostitute his sister as payment for a debt of honour—is too grotesque even to horrify us.

Of the first comment one need only say that beginning with the scene just after the marriage serves the same purpose of stressing the happiness of the Frankfords, and the general opinion that their marriage was indeed regarded as an ideal union. The scene also provides opportunities for dramatic irony and hints of what is to come:

> You that begin betimes thus must needs prove
> Pliant and duteous in your husband's love . . . (I.i. 40-1);

or

> To part you it were sin . . . (I.i. 79);

and above all a means of bringing together all the characters of the main plot and the underplot, and therefore of contrasting this scene with the last in which all are brought together again for a second wedding when Frankford and Mrs Frankford are "new-married" (V.v.84).

Just as the underplot in *The Changeling,* as has been shown by various critics, is directly linked with the main plot, so the

underplot in *A Woman Killed with Kindness* emphasizes the main plot and contrasts with it. So Sir Charles and Wendoll are carried away by 'passion' and endanger their 'souls'. Sir Francis is also in a

> . . . violent humour
> of passion and of love (III.i.108-9),

ready to risk his 'soul'. There is indeed a great deal of talk of sin, the soul, conscience and penitence, and it is suggested that only love can overcome hate, and only kindness can bring true repentance. And there is reconciliation in both main plot and underplot: all repent their hasty actions, and Frankford, Sir Francis and Sir Charles forgive.

Most of the first 59 lines of V.i. of *A Woman Killed with Kindness* appear to justify Eliot's third statement—certainly at a first reading. It is difficult, however, to see how certain of the later lines in the scene can be reconciled with Eliot's interpretation. For example, Susan says plainly:

> . . . But here's a knife,
> To save mine honour, shall slice out my life . . . (V.i.84-5)

and Sir Charles replies:

> I know thou pleasest me a thousand times
> More in that resolution than thy grant.
> Observe her love; to soothe (them in) my suit,
> Her honour she will hazard, though not lose;
> To bring me out of debt, her rigorous hand
> Will pierce her heart. O wonder! that will choose,
> Rather than stain her blood, her life to lose. (V.i.86ff)

And, referring to the knife, Susan underlines all this with:

> Before his unchaste thoughts shall seize on me,
> 'T is here shall my imprison'd soul set free. (V.i.98-9)

Moreover, Sir Charles has also said just previously:

> Thy honour and my soul are equal in my regard;
> Nor will thy brother Charles survive thy shame. (V.i.61-2)

In other words, Susan will be placed in a position in which

> Her honour she will *hazard,* though not *lose.*

If an attempt is made on her honour she will kill herself, and Sir Charles promises not to survive her.

This does not sound like the proposal of a man "ready to prostitute his sister as payment for a debt of honour." But what, then, is Sir Charles's proposal?

When they meet Sir Francis, Sir Charles says:

Acton, I owe thee money, and, being unable
To bring thee the full sum in ready coin,
Lo! for thy more assurance, here's a pawn—
My sister, my dear sister, whose chaste honour
I prize above a million. Here! nay, take her;
She's worth your money, man; do not forsake her. (V.i.104ff)

So far the proposal is clear: Susan is offered as security for his debt, he leaves no doubt that he prizes her chastity, and he warns Sir Francis not to forsake her.

Sir Charles continues:

Acton, she is too poor to be thy bride,
And I too much oppos'd to be thy brother.
There take her to thee; if thou has the heart
To seize her as a rape or lustful prey,
To blur our house, that never yet was stain'd,
To murder her that never meant thee harm,
To kill me now, whom once thou sav'dst from death,
Do them at once; on her all these rely,
And perish with her spotted chastity. (V.i.124ff):

i.e. take her as a "pawn": in our situation we could not expect even if we should want you to take her as a bride. But he now makes it plain to Sir Francis that if he does not take her as a bride, if he has the heart "To seize her as a rape or lustful prey," he will have the deaths of both of them on his conscience.

Sir Charles is not taking so much of a chance with Sir Francis, for he has already learnt from Susan at the end of IV.i. that Sir Francis

. . . dotes on me, and oft hath sent me gifts,
Letters, and tokens; I refus'd them all.

And, although he professes to be opposed to the very idea of being related to Sir Francis by marriage, he has put the idea of marriage into Sir Francis's mind. And he makes the offer in such terms that Sir Francis can hardly do anything other than he does.

The idea of this offer had occurred to Sir Charles at the end of IV.i. But his final words

. . . my heart is set
In one rich gift to pay back all my debt . . .

do not seem to suggest the tones of a man contemplating a dishonourable proposal, though in V.i.45 he admits "shame" in

making even the request, for him a selfish request, that she should consider the possibility of accepting Sir Francis as a husband. For when he discloses his plan, or rather a part of his plan, to Susan in V.i.1ff, leading to "Grant him your bed," the only way we have of reconciling this request with what follows is to assume that he means a marriage bed, though up to v.59 Heywood appears deliberately to have made Sir Charles's request to Susan ambiguous. (Hence in v.60 he calls his assertion "strange:" for Susan—and the audience—it is unexpected after the way she has taken his proposal, though he has never intended anything dishonourable, as he goes on to say: "Thy honour and my soul are equal in my regard.")

This impression is confirmed by Sir Charles's use of the word "love" in

> . . . What mov'd my foe
> To enfranchise me? 'T was, Sister, for your love;
> With full five hundred pounds he bought your love;
> And shall he not enjoy it? (V.i.68ff)

That Sir Charles's intention was to induce Susan to think of Sir Francis as a husband is also suggested by his comment after Susan has agreed to the proposal:

> For this I trick'd you up . . . (V.i.84)

which refers back to the opening line of the scene:

> Brother, why have you trick'd me *like a bride?*

If it is argued that offering his sister even in marriage to repay debt of honour is still prostitution (though it is doubful whether this is what Eliot meant), it may be pointed out that such a judgment is a modern one, and that Sir Charles was doing no more than many heads of houses did in negotiating a marriage.

THE AMERICAN NOVEL AND ENGLISH STUDIES IN SOUTH AFRICA: A SUGGESTION

DAN JACOBSON

IN calling the present little paper a "suggestion", I want especiall to emphasize its tentative nature. I hope to put forward briefl an idea which may be of interest to teachers of English i South African universities; and the hesitation I feel in doing s arises not only out of the complexity of the issues involved, bu out of the feeling that it is not for one who is himself not teacher to give advice on matters which are the professiona concern of others. My chief qualification for speaking at all o these matters is that I have myself been taught English at a Sout African university; and it may be that my remarks are most accept able if they are thought of as simply those of an ex-pupil.

The suggestion which I want to make is in connection with th obvious and much-discussed problem of the 'colonial' complex i literary studies; with the fact that the teacher of English in th South African university is teaching a purely English syllabus t students the majority of whom have never been to England an who have at best sketchy, remote acquaintance with Englis history and the course of social and literary developments i England. Now the first point I want to make is that the difficultie attendant on this are not always those of ignorance and estrange ment, and the incredulity or lack of interest arising from tha estrangement. From my own experience I would say that the Sout African student who is at all attached to his literary studies *accept* far more than is generally supposed his own relationship to th 'foreignness' of English literature: he simply accepts that foreign ness as one of the given facts about books. He regards it, if h considers it at all, as somehow irrelevant to his own sense of th works, and to the works themselves. One does not miss what on knows nothing about; and I would say that however puzzled th student may be inwardly by the discrepancies there are betwee

ıe world of books and the world around him, he nevertheless elieves them to be substantially one world: as indeed they are. f the student did not see Johannesburg in terms of Dickens's ondon, and Dickens's London as some richer yet recognizable xtension of Johannesburg, he could not read the works at all, r at any rate he could not read them with the devotion and ıtimacy which a great many students, as we know, feel towards ıe works they study.

However, it seems clear to me that what I have called the tudent's acceptance of the foreignness of the works he reads arries with it certain dangers; and the most obvious, as well as ıe most far-reaching, is that he is likely to forget, or possibly he ill never conceive, how much a literature is not a matter of the ritings of certain individual men of genius, but is an expression f the society out of which the genius arises: that a literature is s firmly embedded in a local soil as, say, a country's architecture . Conversely, he may not understand how the individual writer, ı articulating certain aspects of his country's social or moral raditions, is at the same time attempting to modify them. The ruth is that any deep sense of a tradition—or of what T. S. Eliot as called the "mind" of a country—is something that it is exremely difficult for any South African student to come by. His own ountry has barely any 'mind' in the past, and little enough in the resent; and for this reason the South African student (in his very cceptance of the foreignness of the literary work) may come to ıvisage the literary tradition he is studying as something freeoating, disconnected, a kind of palace of art where nobody ctually lives, though admission to it is nevertheless open and free) all who join a library. Literary studies are indeed open to all; ut if they are to be meaningful they have to be lived in and ved with, at the full stretch of the imagination and the senses. ı other words, it seems to me that the danger is that the student ı South Africa can believe that he knows more than he really oes know; that his appropriation of the work he is studying can emand too little of his own immediate perceptions as a South frican.

It is for this reason that I would like to suggest that it may be rofitable for English departments in South African univerties to devote some of their time to a study of the American ovel in the nineteenth century, particularly perhaps among their

senior students, who may be expected to have a better grasp of the problems raised by that study. I want to emphasize at the same time that I believe it to be quite correct that the English syllabus of South African universities should remain, literally, an 'English' syllabus; to attempt to make it anything else would be simply to impoverish it. One of my points, indeed, is that the development of the American novel cannot profitably be considered apart from the development of the novel in England: the continual contrast and comparison between the two forms would be one of the most important aspects of the study. What I feel would be the major benefit from a study of the American novel is that the difficulties of living in a 'mindless' country (if the term may be forgiven) would be raised to the level of self-consciousness. The student's sense of tradition and development—and his sense of their tenuousness locally—could be deepened, enriched and given point.

In saying this I am not suggesting that the United States is, or ever has been, a 'mindless' country: if it had been, it could not have produced the body of work which I am putting forward for study. But in the American novel we do find points of comparison, in many disparate areas, with the student's own experience in South Africa. There is, first of all, the simple fact that in literary terms (at least as far as the English language is concerned) the Americans can be considered to be 'colonials' too. Nightingales, to give the most often-quoted instance, are not to be found on the American continent either: that, already, would show the student that literature need not *necessarily* be about a mythological country where nightingales flourish, but can be about any country, even his own. Secondly, in the American novel the student can see how a locality, previously unwritten-about, and in that respect similar to his own, asserts itself in the works he is studying; how even the absence of a past can assert itself. He can see in what sense the American novelists remained dependent upon Europe; and how, the more familiar European modes of thought were to them, the more profitably they could write about their own country and what was immediately around them. Had there not been this familiarity, the tension between Europe and the New World could never have become one of the enduring themes of the American novel, to be found as deeply, and as fructifyingly in the work of Mark Twain, (the great Westerner, as he is commonly

ıpposed to be), as in that of Hawthorne or Henry James. And ı this way the student can approach the theme of national ıentity, which, as a problem, will be familiar enough to him. And ɔ too will such characteristic American literary themes as that of ıe ideal in contrast with the reality of democracy, the threat and ıberation of the wilderness, the anxieties of the encounters with ıboriginal peoples and negro slaves.

But above all, in studying the American novel, the South African ıudent will be confronted with a body of literature which is ıarply recognizable as following its own lines and treating with ıtensity its own themes; a literature which is in English and which et has its own distinctive national tradition. For it must not be ıought that I am suggesting such a study only because of certain ɔrtuitous and rather shadowy resemblances between the history f South Africa and that of the United States. What I hope might merge from the study is a sharper understanding on the part of ıe student as to what is problematic in his *own* relationship to terature, both as a South African and as a modern man. In a ense, it can be said that the chief advantage of the study would e a 'background' one, though in using the word here I must mphasize that it is the student's own background, his own appre-ension of himself, which one would want to enrich, rather than) submit him merely to another quasi-historical distraction. ertainly, I would not advocate this study at all if I did not elieve that the works and the writers I have in mind are of major terary importance; if the novels were not great literature they ɔuld hardly teach the student anything about the kind of problem have attempted briefly to adumbrate here. I believe that the merican novel in the nineteenth century is a great achievement, y any standards, and that in Hawthorne, Melville, Mark Twain, ıd Henry James pre-eminently, we have a literature which stands ɔmparison, in intrinsic interest, with that of any other period in ıe history of prose which the student is likely to study—quite ɔart, that is, from the special kind of interest I have postulated ɔr South African conditions. And if he were to read intensively nong these writers, it is my belief that he would be able to return freshed and stimulated to the study of the novel in England. Let me repeat that I do regard the study of the literature of that ɔuntry as the central concern of the English department in the outh African university.)

The problem one is always confronted with can be summarized crudely: time against value. Students and teachers alike have only so much time; what can they study that will be of the greatest benefit to them, out of the vast store of recorded literature, in the time at their disposal? And if it is agreed that England must continue to be the centre of English studies for South African students, how would departments be able to cope with the pressure of an extra course? In attempting to answer these questions, I can only refine my suggestion further. While a fuller course in the American novel may well be offered to postgraduate students, it seems to me that it would be most worthwhile if, in the ordinary course of undergraduate study of the nineteenth-century English novel, three of the most important American novels were introduced to students. The novels I have in mind particularly are *The Scarlet Letter, Huckleberry Finn,* and—even if his work is already studied as 'English'—one of the novels of Henry James, *Roderick Hudson.* I have chosen these three novels because they all dramatize explicitly, as well as implicitly, some of the problems which should be agitating the mind of the South African student of literature. *The Scarlet Letter,* for example, can in certain aspects be considered as being as much of a 'frontier' novel as *Huckleberry Finn*—which is in itself an obvious (perhaps in South Africa a dangerously obvious) choice. And of the novels of Henry James I have chosen *Roderick Hudson* because it deals so directly, among other things, with the relation between 'art' and 'life' both in Europe and in the 'new' country.

The paper began with an apology: it should perhaps end with a request. I realize that there may well be university teachers who have already attempted something of what I have been urging above; if so, I hope they will be moved to comment and correction. In South Africa today, more than in most other countries, the survival of any sense of the tradition we are speaking of is in their hands.

ENGLISH IN SOUTH AFRICA, 1960

I. INTRODUCTION

G. KNOWLES-WILLIAMS

ON the eve of the Union celebrations it is fitting that we should take stock of the nature of our South African heritage and ıe contributions made to that heritage by various sections of our ɔmmunity. I would suggest as a motto for Union celebrations—Jnity in diversity'. Every section of our community has made its ɔecial contributions to the development of a distinctively South frican culture. Every individual South African will feel that he , in the first place, a South African; but he will feel also, and egitimately, that he must keep alive the spirit and the values that is forbears held dear, whether they came from Holland or Britain r any other country. For him, these values and that spirit are est expressed in the language which his forbears used or out of hich his own language grew.

For a substantial section of the South African public that ınguage is English. In this series of talks we are concerned with English in South Africa'. Since South Africa is a bilingual ɔuntry, the English-speaking South African should regard himself s a partner in the great adventure of building a nation distinctive ı the duality of its culture. That duality is reflected in its two fficial languages—although, of course, the contributions made to ıe development of our country are not restricted to these two ınguage groups, as they have been enriched by many other ultural streams as well.

It seems likely that English will become 'the' world language, nd it is established here as one of our official languages. Its value ɔr us, however, lies not only in its importance as a trade language nd a means of international communication, but also as a cultural ıd educational force. It has developed over hundreds of years ıto a most rich and subtle instrument of expression. Its flexibility ıd precision are commensurate with the prodigious number of ords it has collected or devised. Because of its wide distribution, ıe written heritage of the world—the great store of knowledge

built up through the long history of civilization—has been well translated and well printed in English; so that this store of knowledge is readily available to us. Apart from the abundant translations from other languages into English, the English-speaking peoples in the British Commonwealth and in America have themselves produced a great wealth of literature. To this vast reservoir of knowledge and entertainment the English language is the key—a key which we, in South Africa, still possess.

Language is a living thing which is continually changing. It can have no rigidly fixed grammar, idiom or vocabulary. English-speaking communities in different parts of the world have inevitably diverged, to a greater or lesser extent, in their speech habits. In the writings of South African authors the special context in which English is used has influenced the language itself as well as the subject-matter and outlook. Various aspects and implications of such divergencies in English, in its specifically South African context, will be considered in this series by the speakers. It is, however, advisable to try to distinguish between habits of speech which are due to carelessness or are mere vulgarisms, and new forms which are a justifiable enrichment of the language.

The next talk will be on South African English pronunciation. The third will deal with the difficulties which face the Afrikaans-speaking South African in his efforts to master English. Outstanding contributions made by South African writers in English will be the subject of the fourth talk. Special aspects of the vocabulary of the South African poets, under the title 'The Language of the Land', will be dealt with in the next; and the final talk in the series will go beyond the subject of the South African flavour imparted to English in our country, and will consider some examples of English at its finest and strongest. In the last talk we shall be reminded of the wealth of that heritage of English literature which comes to us from beyond our borders, and stretches back hundreds of years into history. Shakespeare and the Authorized Version of the Bible, as well as the countless contributions from English-speaking countries in more recent times, are a part of our inheritance as South Africans.

If we are to continue to enjoy this inheritance which has come to us through the English language, we must maintain in South Africa a good standard of English. More and more South Africans are growing up to-day with a knowledge of English which is quite inadequate for the appreciation of this wealth of English literature

During the last fifteen or twenty years, there has been a manifest eterioration in the quality of English in South Africa, in the chools, the universities, and in public life generally. We can, herefore, no longer sit back and let English take care of itself in outh Africa. We must actively concern ourselves to preserve it nd to improve the standard of our speech and our writing.

In *My Fair Lady,* Professor Higgins asks the pertinent question Why can't the English teach their children how to speak?" lovenly speech habits are not peculiar to South Africa. They are artly the results of universal laziness which takes the line of east resistance, slurs vowel sounds and fails to pronounce con-onants clearly. Partly, they are a kind of inverted snobbery—the ear that young people, especially, have of appearing to 'put on ide', to exhibit differences in their manner of speech from the ompanions with whom it is so important to them that they should e identified. Careful pronunciation has come to be confounded ith affectation and an 'Oxford accent'.

Instead of being ashamed of slovenly speech, the child in our range modern world has become ashamed of speaking carefully. et the ability to speak distinctly and pleasantly has always been egarded as the mark of an educated person. Said Professor liggins to Eliza Doolittle, "Remember that you are a human being ith a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech: that your ative language is the language of Shakespeare and Milton and ie Bible, and don't sit there crooning like a bilious pigeon."

Slovenly pronunciation, though not, perhaps, a major cause of isspelling, contributes to the huge crop of faulty spellings which isfigure examination papers in our schools and universities. nglish spelling is undoubtedly fantastic, having preserved all sorts remnants, native and foreign, and having never been reformed; ut even words which are phonetically pronounced are misspelt ecause they are mispronounced: e.g.

disgust—spelt 'discust' because the "g" is wrongly pronounced
temperamental—spelt without the "a", 'tempermental'
environment—spelt without the "n"—'enviroment'
studying—spelt without the "y"—'studing'

nd words like *illuminate* and *eliminate, effect* and *affect* are often nfused because they are carelessly pronounced.

My own experience of teaching English in South Africa for any years would induce me to emphasize, in addition to slipshod

speech and poor spelling, certain basic weaknesses in the English of young South Africans—poverty of vocabulary, a lack of a sense of sentence-structure and grammatical relationships, and a failure to grasp the idioms of the language. The main cause of these weaknesses is to my mind, lack of opportunity to use the language, especially, of course, among Afrikaans-speaking South Africans. With the best teaching and the best will in the world, a child cannot master a language in the class-room. He must learn it naturally, by hearing it and using it day by day, outside as well as inside the class-room. I am convinced that if young South Africans were given the opportunity, from their earliest years, of using English and hearing it well spoken, there would be a striking improvement in the standard of English.

Let us, by all means, strive continually to improve our standards of teaching and achievement in the schools, but let us remember that, under the conditions which obtain in South Africa to-day, improvements in our educational system, desirable as these are, will not, of themselves, arrest the decline of English. We must provide an environment in which our children have the opportunity, day by day, of mastering the language by using it.

With the object of arresting the decline in the standard of English in South Africa, an association called the South African Council for English Education (S.A.C.E.E.) was founded some years ago. It is an educational and cultural association with branches all over South Africa, and is concerned with such problems as the shortage of teachers who are competent to teach English or to teach through the English medium. It is doing everything in its power to encourage more English-speaking South Africans to go into the teaching profession. It keeps a watchful eye on examination standards and curricula in schools. It is striving to foster among all South Africans who value the English language a heightened awareness of the cultural values implicit in the preservation of a good standard of English in our country.

Under the auspices of S.A.C.E.E. it is proposed to establish a Southern African Academy for English Language, Literature and Education. The objects of this Academy are—I quote from the Draft Constitution—"to strive for the advancement of the English language, literature, education and traditions, the improvement of standards of English in all spheres of life, and the maintenance in Southern Africa of the concepts underlying the civilization of the English-speaking peoples." The Academy has set itself a pro-

ramme of activities calculated to awaken and sustain public nterest in the English language and its literature. Membership vill be an honour reserved for those who have made some notable ontribution to the cause of 'good English'. The awards of the Academy are designed to encourage people in every walk of life o strive consciously for higher standards in English usage.

An English Academy may, on the face of it, seem to be a omewhat *un*English conception; but when, as in South Africa oday, English is the language of a minority, although a large ninority group; and where the average English-speaking South frican seems singularly apathetic about the state of his language, uch an Academy might well perform a valuable function.

At this time, therefore, when we are preparing to celebrate our Unity in Diversity' which is of the essence of the compromise rrived at when the Union of South Africa was founded, it is ertinent to remind ourselves of the value and importance to outh Africa, as a whole, of the English language and its literature, nd of the necessity for taking practical steps to keep English in a tate of good repair.

2. SOUTH AFRICAN ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

D. HOPWOOD

In this talk on the English language in South Africa, the subject is South African English pronunciation. The last four words are the title of a work I published some thirty years ago. In the few minutes allotted I shall try to review the position to-day.

The question of pronunciation is, of course, only one aspect of a much wider subject, South African English, which includes also vocabulary, idiom and phrase, and what is meant by the term accent as popularly used. Vocabulary, phrase and idiom furnish obvious examples of South African forms of English, such as *commando, trek* and *kraal,* and I was pleased to come across (in a non-South African setting) *tickey* and *footsack* in a play *Colonel Wotherspoon* (1935) by James Bridie. The differences of pronunciation are sometimes difficult to define and explain in detail. Nonetheless these differences, however subtle, are to be heard everywhere in South Africa; and however scattered and occasional their appearance, the use of many of them or some of them in the same speaker stamp him as coming from South Africa.

At this point I want to say that as a student of language I am not condemning the variations; it is as a matter of interest that I record them. It is as a teacher of English that I suggest one form may be more effective than another. Language as speech is always changing, and so, like other things in nature, can be 'trained and pruned' for man's better use. In changing, language tends to separate into dialects, forms of the language still generally intelligible to speakers of that language; and, on the other hand, at the present day there are many factors and influences which tend to keep a language generally uniform: such factors as improved social conditions, direct and indirect contact provided by improved and quicker transport and communications, broadcasts and records, schooling and education, plus the ideals of more self-conscious and artistic speakers.

Some differences arise as reflexions of the different environments and living conditions of various speakers. Let us accept these natural differentiations, providing the speakers aim at using the

language at its best. We shall then all contribute to the good sense and the good use of the language, and thus help to enrich the general treasury of our speech.

There are now usually three chief forms of the spoken language: Received or Standard speech, spoken by those who are most widely understood; Regional speech, which is the slightly differentiated forms to which most dialects have now been toned down; and Modified Standard, the speaker of which retains some characteristics of the dialect of a particular region, though he is acquainted with the sounds and usages of Standard speech.

The literary language is a conservative form of received or accepted general speech, and thus, unless a dialect is being deliberately written, it can be assumed that a writer speaks Standard English or a slightly modified form of it. An author strives for perfection of communication, which will be reflected in his speech as well as in his writing. In speaking, individuals have natural differences, and communities come to share the differences.

South African English is 'news', and most of the reports given in the Press are unfavourable in some respect. We are told that our speech is 'flat' and 'monotonous', 'jerky', too evenly stressed, pitched too high, has wrong intonation, is spoken with little movement of the jaw and lips, inclined to nasality—these and other statements I have noted over the years. Only occasionally does one hear of South Africans being preferred for their clarity of voice, or distinction of utterance. Such differences as exist are most marked in the usage of younger people, and their speech is sometimes condemned as less euphonious, less intelligible, and as deviating too far from the known and acknowledged forms of sound, word, phrase, and idiom in Standard English.

In the past I have tried to show that South African English was, on the one hand, a more or less unified derivative of English dialects, chiefly Cockney and Northern English, and on the other, that it was being increasingly influenced by Afrikaans. Standard English, spoken by many people in the Union, plays an increasing part as elsewhere, in modifying regional variations. I think the South African is an idealist: he wants the best. In speaking English, he wants to speak Good English; there ensues a healthy struggle between nature and nurture; the result is a modified South African speech, good enough for General English, and distinctive enough for his patriotism.

Let us consider some of the more marked differences between South African English pronunciation and English pronunciation as represented in Jones's *Pronouncing Dictionary*, which, in spite of the author's disclaimer, can be taken as authoritative.

Here are some examples:

Standard English	**South African English**
fair hair	fai(r) hai(r)
score	sco(re)
milk	meelk or mulk
is	ees
car	cor
rain	ra-in
really	reelee
mountain	meoun(tai)n
Denise(z)	De'niece'(s)
oh	(e)oh
eye	aai
man	men
thirty	thetee
women	woomin
best man	bestm(a)n
masseur	massee-er
with (*th* as in *th*at)	wuth (*th* as in *th*in)
moon	mewn
prescríbed	*pree*scribed
Decémber	*Dee*cember
Mónday	Mond*ai*y

It would take a long time to explain these variations, but they are all explicable and understandable. The use of only three or four of these variations is almost sufficient to indicate a South African speaker of English, no matter how much he otherwise conforms.

Here are a few more divergences:

'line' is sometimes heard for 'lion'	
quite	quiet,
Europeen	Europe-an,
p(e)out-ry	poet-ry,
rune	ruin,
creul (and so spelt)	cruel,
beeng	being.

Final consonants in Standard English are more clearly uttered than in South African English, as, for instance, in *wool, text, districts, five-sixths, asked.*

Again, voiced final consonants occasionally in South African English sound like their breathed counterparts, e.g.

'cub' like 'cup',
'bed' like 'bet',
'bag' like 'back'.

In English, unused, unexpended breath is passed through the mouth at the end of a word, not through the nose. One result of the confusion between the above pairs of words is that the plural of *cub, bed, bag,* tends to be sounded in South Africa with *-s* instead of with *-z.*

The plural of nouns ending in a sibilant is written *-es.* In South African English the pronunciation often follows the spelling instead of the English-spoken plural in *-iz,* as in

wish*es,* rich*es,* wag*es,* judg*es,* etc.

The plural after a vowel is also pronounced (z) and not (s) as in *ladies, monkeys, days* etc, as sometimes in South African English.

The same rule applies also to verbs in the third person singular present indicative, as in

he wish*es,* she nag*s,* it goe*s,* etc.

Nouns ending in *-th,* whether pronounced as *th* (thin) or as *th* (that), end their plural usually with *th* (as in *th*at), and s pronounced (z), e.g.

pa*th* — pa*ths* (z)
wrea*th* — wrea*ths*
you*th* — you*ths*
boo*th* — boo*ths*
hou*se* — hou*ses,* where the first s-sound also becomes a z-sound in the plural word.

The possessive or genitive singular written *'s*, the plural *-es*, and genitive plural *s'* of words ending in *-s* should also be pronounced (iz); thus

mistress-	*'s* (iz),
James-	*'s* (iz),
princéss-	*'s* (iz), *-es* (iz), *es'* (iz).

(But *Princéss Ann*, all syllables with even stress or accent.)

Words ending in *-lm*, or *-ln* are pronounced as one syllable in Standard English, but very commonly as two in South African English, e.g.

Milne	not Millin
film	„ fil(u)m
whelm	„ whel(u)m.

(Whereas *-ism* at the end of a word does have two syllables, e.g. *-iz-m*, as in *realism*.)

The division of the syllable in English is before a consonant or consonant group, which occurs between two vowels, e.g.

su-bordinate	not sub-ordinate
wi-thin	not with-in
wi-thout	not with-out
bo-ttle	not bot-tel
bu-tt(o)n	not but-ton
Bri-t(ai)n	not Brit-tain,

but *mountain* (moun-tn);

top-point	not to-point (with indistinct syllabic separation)
mid-day	not mi-day

There are abridgements in the speech tradition:

extr(a)ordinary	not extra-ordinary
to(wa)rds	not to-wards or to-werds,

and *gentleman* is pronounced the same way, whether singular or plural.

In Standard English, division of the syllables and the slurring of unstressed vowels and diphthongs make words in the same breath group glide into one another; this sometimes brings about confusion, exploited in the pronunciation of *not at all* in the

conundrum:

Q: Why is a little nigger not a nigger?

A: Because he is *not a tall* black (not-at-all).

Intervocal consonants in Standard English are liaison sounds. If the syllables are pronounced without running-on, there is a tendency to introduce either a glottal stop (giving a staccato effect), or to introduce an unjustified *r* between vowels. Thus

the idea/of it instead of Standard English *the idea of it* (with a glide between the intermediate vowels),

law(r) and order instead of *law and order.*

Spelling pronunciations are beginning to take the place of traditional English pronunciations. Thus

ve-ni-son instead of ven'zon

me-di-cine instead of med'cine (but *medicinal,* as always)

business probably will not change because of the new word *busyness;*

Forehead is supplanting 'forrid'.

In this group (although unaffected as yet in Standard English) are:

knowledge (the clergyman's 'know-ledge'),

vineyard, cupboard, saucepan, necklace, eyelet.

Again,

blackguard is different from *black guard,* and

a *bláckbird* from a *bláck bird.*

A useful return to an older pronunciation (perhaps influenced by Scots and Irish) is heard when initial *wh-* is differentiated from initial *w-:*

when	wen (a blemish on the skin),
which	witch (feminine of 'wizard'),
wheel	weal (a scar).

Some pairs of words are not differentiated in South African English, where the tendency is to use the second pronunciation for both:

resígn (z) pronounced re-sign (to sign again),

resoúnd (z) (to reverberate) re-sound (to sound again),

resórt (z) re-sort (to sort again),

and so *rée*search (as in American) for Standard English reseárch.

Standard English also differentiates between

séparate (adj)	and to	sepa*rate*,
éstimate (noun)		to esti*mate*,
ádvocate (noun)		to advo*cate*,
áttribute (noun)		to at*tri*bute,
contribútion (noun)		to con*tri*bute,
distribútion (noun)		to dis*tri*bute

There are characteristics and tendencies of Southern English speech that many speakers do not like, but lack of time forbids my mentioning them, as well as other problems and anomalies in the pronunciation of present-day English generally, and in the pronunciation of South African English specifically.

Literary English may be learnt from printed examples; good spoken English can only be learnt by imitating good speakers. The good speaker is self-aware, critical, and adaptable—prerequisites of all education, really self-cultivation. Such speakers help the genius of the language, making for what is beautiful, up-to-date and serviceable in both good speaking and good writing. Speaking is complex, including the art of composition as well as the art of elocution, although they can be separated for the training of either; expression in enunciation can be as vital and significant as the contents of whatever is communicated. The utterance should go with the thought. How it is said may be as important as what is said.

NOTE.—*The above spelling variations to denote variations in pronunciation were rough indications for my use in the broadcast talk. I ask for the indulgence of readers on this point. The best representation of variations would have been phonetic script.*

D.H.

3. THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE AFRIKAANS CHILD IN HIS STRUGGLES WITH ENGLISH

N. SABBAGHA

THE difficulties that an Afrikaans child experiences in learning English are difficulties that touch the vexed problem of bilingualism at all points. They are difficulties that are encountered in the learning of any language as a second language unless that language is closely related to the mother tongue, and they are probably no different from those that an English child has to contend with in learning Afrikaans.

The task of those who have to teach English as the second language is no less arduous than that of the learner, because the problem of bilingualism and of teaching the second language has not been thoroughly investigated. The standards to be aimed at and the methods to be employed have not been defined exactly or conclusively. Do we, for example, in seeking bilingualism, demand complete fluency and absolute correctness in the second language or do we desire nothing more than a working knowledge, that is the ability to understand the language in its everyday spoken and written form, and the ability to make ourselves sufficiently understood in it? These are matters about which nobody, in the present circumstances, can afford to be dogmatic.

The difficulties we are concerned with here can perhaps be best explained by means of a comparison between the manner in which a child acquires his mother tongue and the manner in which he learns a second language. It is generally accepted that a child learns his mother tongue in the most natural manner, that is without the aid of dictionaries, grammar books, and formal instruction. Long before he learns to write it, he learns to speak it; and the manner in which he learns to speak it is by imitation. Around him he hears the sounds of that language uttered and the words of that language spoken. He imitates these sounds, imperfectly at first, but more and more correctly in the course of time through constant practice. In imitating them, he is not at all self-conscious, and his mistakes do not in the least curb his eagerness to imitate what he has heard or to express himself by means

of what he has acquired through imitation. His use of the language, through practice, becomes an un-selfconscious habit, a habit that enables him to satisfy his primary, everyday needs.

Most often, when the child has to learn the second language, the urge to imitate has begun to decrease and he has, consequently, become more self-conscious. Whereas he has built up one set of language habits in his mother tongue, he now has to acquire a completely new set, and often the opportunities he needs for establishing the new habits are not provided within his immediate environment. They then have to be provided at school and more specifically in the class-room, where his self-consciousness is intensified by the fear of making mistakes and so making himself look ridiculous in the presence of others. Moreover, the lessons in the second language may strike him as being unnatural because they are hardly related to his primary needs and seem to be remote from the world of thought and feeling with which he is familiar. The practice he has in using the second language in the class-room is more limited than the practice he has had in using his mother tongue, because there are others now who have to be given their share of practice and attention, and the second language is but one of several subjects in the school curriculum.

The later his introduction to the second language, the greater will be the difficulties he experiences. To delay the learning of the second language until his adolescence or his university years is to make the task all the more difficult. Linguistic habits tend to become fixed about the age of twelve to fourteen. An eminent present-day linguist has stated that "An adult has usually over-learned his native pattern—which is the chief reason why it is hard to acquire new, i.e. foreign, patterns after adolescence." We may add that it is difficult, for the same reason, to eradicate faulty habits in the second language during adolescence or after. These are matters that inevitably affect both the learner and the teacher not only at the school but also at the university stage.

To revert to the difficulties encountered by the learner, we should observe that they arise mainly from the habits that make up the child's use of the mother tongue: pronunciation, vocabulary, idiom, word order, and grammatical forms.

A large number of Afrikaans speech sounds are sounds that are also heard in spoken English; but in learning English, the Afrikaans child has to acquire certain sounds that are not heard at all in his own language, such as the *th* in *then* or *those* or *there*

or the (dg) sound that occurs twice in *judge* and at the beginning of *June* or *jury*. The voiced *th* he tends to reduce to *d*, which is common in Afrikaans, and the (dg) sound to *j*. These are new habits that his tongue and other speech organs have to acquire, and they are primarily physical. What matters here is not so much his accent, as his pronunciation. For accent we make allowances, but we do not, as a rule, tolerate inept pronunciation.

In writing, of course, speech sounds are represented, though imperfectly, by the letters of the alphabet, but the letters of the Afrikaans alphabet do not always represent the same sounds as the letters of the English alphabet; and, what is more confusing, English makes use of letters that are seldom, if ever, used in Afrikaans, *c*, *q*, *x*, and *z*, for example. By force of habit, the Afrikaans-speaking child tends to spell English words like *special* and *social* with an *s* in the middle, because the Afrikaans equivalents of these words are spelt with the *s* and not the *c*, the *s* appearing to be a little more logical in these instances. The Afrikaans child is hardly to be blamed for misspelling or, conversely, mispronouncing words like *thumb* and *lamb*, *knee* and *knuckle*, because Afrikaans has hardly any so-called 'silent' letters. His complete bewilderment at the spelling of words such as *systematically*, *physical*, and *psychology* is shared by all foreigners at their first encounter with the anomalies of English spelling. And so, if the Afrikaans child is to master these anomalies, his eyes in reading and his hand in writing have to acquire a new set of habits, too.

In his mother tongue the Afrikaans child has acquired, by habit, a vocabulary adequate to his needs, and he has come by that vocabulary not only through hearing the words used but also through his reading. To build up an equally adequate vocabulary in English, he has to hear the language spoken often and has to read it extensively. What complicates matters for him is that the vocabulary of English, with a larger stock of synonyms and foreign borrowings, is much more copious than the vocabulary of Afrikaans, which is also a much younger language. In acquiring the vocabulary of English, he is probably relieved to find that there are a number of English words that resemble Afrikaans words, the reason for the resemblance being that the two languages have a common Germanic origin, but this similarity itself can easily lead him into error, especially in respect of idiom. The Anglicisms that bedevil Afrikaans and the Afrikanerisms that have found their

way into South African English arise from the similarities there are in the vocabularies of the two languages. In either of the two it can be disastrous to confuse the Afrikaans *meen* with the English *mean* or the Afrikaans *handel* with the English *handle*. The English teacher who knows Afrikaans well fully understands why the Afrikaans child tends to use an unnecessary *what* after *than* in comparisons—for example, "He is taller than what I am"—or why he inserts an unnecessary *out* between *consist* and *of*—for example, "The book consists out of 300 pages." Others, who know better than the schoolchild, do not hesitate to use the phrase *just now* with reference to the future, and some have even been heard to say that someone "can stand his man" or is someone else's "Moses". Afrikanerisms like *horsesickness, stamp mealies,* and *fowlhock* are not altogether uncommon in South African English. It is these tendencies that have induced some linguists to believe that Afrikaans and English in South Africa will eventually be levelled down to a single mixed language, consisting largely of the elements that are now common to the two. The Afrikaans child, however, who is to be taught how to discriminate between the common elements, has to develop new habits of association.

The order in which words are arranged in a sentence is yet another habit that characterizes any language, and in this respect too there are differences between English and Afrikaans. In very broad and general terms, we may say that the Afrikaans verb, in all but simple sentences, tends to move towards the end of the clause or the sentence, whereas the English verb seems to prefer a position somewhere near the middle unless special emphasis is sought. It should not surprise us then to find strange inversions in the English sentences of an Afrikaans child, inversions like, "Was it not for him, I would have been drowned" or "Typical of him was his kindness."

It is in his use of the English grammatical forms, however, that the Afrikaans child perhaps experiences his greatest exasperation. Afrikaans is not a highly inflected language and is certainly not as complex in its inflexions as English is. Though Afrikaans distinguishes between singular and plural in the noun and between first, second, and third person in the personal pronoun, it does not distinguish between these things in the verb. The Afrikaans child who uses *is* with the singular and plural, first, second, and third person subjects, inevitably finds the English *am* and *are* bewildering, and also *was* and *were, has* and *have.* He

xperiences similar difficulties in distinguishing between English djectives and adverbs and also between some of the tense forms. n the use of the grammatical forms of any language, the correct abits of discrimination and selection have to be cultivated, and here, too, are new habits that the Afrikaans child has to develop n his use of English. Whether these can be inculcated without ormal instruction or, at the least, detailed explanations is a moot oint.

If we concede, then, that fluency and correctness in the use of language are a result of habit, brought about by constant ractice, it follows that English, or any other language for that natter, cannot be learnt passively, that is, merely from books or hrough formal instruction. It must be learnt actively. The earner must hear the language spoken often, and he must read it vith as much interest as he reads his mother tongue; but he ust, above all, use it and use it frequently. He must, by imita- ion of the best speakers and writers, apply what he hears and eads. Unless he feels that he needs the language, he will not use t; unless he is given the opportunity to use it, he will not perfect is command of it; and unless he finds himself in an environment ongenial to the use of the language, he will never learn it with nthusiasm. The necessary incentives and opportunities must be rovided if English is to be taught or learnt effectively as a second anguage.

4. SOUTH AFRICAN NOVELISTS AND STORY-WRITERS

H. K. GIRLING

LITTLE more than ten years ago there were only two well-known South African prose writers—Olive Schreiner and Sarah Gertrude Millin—though sometimes we added Pauline Smith as a third. In 1948 the appearance of *Cry, the Beloved Country* set a pattern for a new generation of South African novelists. Alan Paton was followed by two other writers of distinction, Nadine Gordimer and Dan Jacobson, and by some notable talents, of whom Harry Bloom, Daphne Rooke and Doris Lessing gained wide recognition. The endeavour common to this new generation is an attempt to find roots in Africa, to establish enduring monuments of culture after the three hundred years that have produced so few.

Olive Schreiner's novel *The Story of an African Farm* was the first attempt to express the passions and aspirations of a people belonging to a land of rock and scrub. But everyone has some dim recollection of Waldo and Lyndall on the Karoo farm; I should prefer to speak of a less successful novel published fourteen years later, in 1897, *Trooper Peter Halkett of Mashonaland*. It contains a good deal of crude polemic against Cecil Rhodes and the Chartered Company in the territory now known as Rhodesia, and some lengthy sermons delivered by a stranger, Christ himself, in a transparent disguise, who comes to the koppie where Peter Halkett is spending a lonely night and converts him. Peter renounces his money-grabbing ambitions and dies rescuing a captured Mashona tied up for execution. Through the mouth of Christ, Olive Schreiner expresses her complete trust in Africa, in its wild creatures and in its inhabitants, white and black. When Peter warns the stranger that he will be in trouble for helping a wounded survivor of a kraal the soldiers destroyed, the stranger replies, "The young ravens have meat given to them . . . and the lions go down to the streams to drink." The veld shelters its wounded creatures, just as in the end it shelters Peter Halkett's bones. They rest in the care of the sun and stream, nourished as

the waters nourish all living things, savage lions or marauding soldiers.

For Pauline Smith, the veld offers no promise of freedom, it is imprisoning and enclosing. The *bywoners* in *The Little Karoo,* the name of her first book and the locality of her stories, are penned into narrow valleys, visited rarely by rain and scarcely more frequently by ox-wagons. Her people are desperately poor; the good are mostly harsh and the lively ones usually sinful. On this cruel ground, among these worn and bitter toilers, Pauline Smith finds green places of tenderness and devoted self-sacrifice. Her situations are saved from sentimentality only because they seem to be cradled in work-worn hands, as rough in grain as a handful of karoo soil.

In one of the stories, a father marries his daughter to a wicked mad old man to get water for his parched lands. The sacrificed daughter dies saying, "He was not always mad . . . and who am I that I should judge him?" And her sister repeats to her father, who repents of having bought water with blood, "Do as now seems right to you . . . who am I that I should judge you?" This is Pauline Smith's verdict on the cruelties and sins of her unhappy people—who is to judge? Only the land which drained the vigour of their bodies and absorbed the rivulets of their love can judge. The karoo will understand and forgive.

It is the gift of a romancer to keep us with him in event after event, longing to know how Cinderella gets her prince and how Red Riding Hood escapes the wolf. Sarah Gertrude Millin is South Africa's queen of story-tellers. She does not need to persuade us that her fictions are plausible or that her historical novels are accurate; we believe whatever she tells us because event follows event in a sequence that seems inevitable. In *God's Step-Children* she illuminates our current obsession with skin-colour by a chain of coincidences that have a ring of inevitability. She reminds us that in 1920, about the time of her novel, a man of thirty could talk to his grandfather of 70, born in 1850, and might even see his great-grandmother of 90, born in 1830. And supposing that he was a white man and that his great-grandmother was the daughter of a Hottentot? In her reconstruction a hundred years have melted away and we see Africa again as an untamed, wild country with its white men still clinging to the seaboard.

Dr Millin, thinking of all the stunted and miserable lives along the line of inherited colour mixture, regards the sense of taint as tragic. Yet she knows that emergence from a colour class is not so rare, and that if salvation lies in successful forgetting, the years will bring it. Who, except a privileged few, can look back further than their great-grandparents? If the span of her novel had been wider than four generations, the conclusions might have been more optimistic, as Dr Millin allows herself to hint:

> Heaven knows what generations of sorrow; through what daily bitterness of self-distrust; through what oceans of ostracism, that man with that fading but never dying darkness in him, arrived at havens of social grace; but once arrived, his life was distinguished in no noticeable sense from the lives of those around him, and as far as all outward appearances might indicate, the world held him to be as white as he looked.

The story-teller in Dr Millin has led her to the dissolution in time of the memory of a taint which brought so much unhappiness. A story that has no end cannot but be hopeful. There are no stains that the years cannot wash out and no tears that the oblivion of time will not dry.

South African novels came of age with the publication of *Cry, the Beloved Country*. Novelists had been observers, now they became participators. Alan Paton is saying that I too might bewail my son as Stephen Kumalo bewailed his, I might fumble into murder like Absalom Kumalo or into miscegenation like Pieter van Vlaanderen. He will not concede that either he or his reader is in any way a stranger on this continent. Every soul and every blade of grass is his responsibility, and ours.

Listen to these voices from Alan Paton's novels. The first is familiar:

> It is wrong to say, as they do in remote places like Bloemfontein and Grahamstown and Beaufort West, that Johannesburg thinks only of money. We have as many good husbands and fathers, I think, as any town or city, and some of our big men make great collections of art, which means work for artists, and saves art from dying out; and some have great ranches in the North, where they shoot game and feel at one with Nature.

Paton's irony presents this voice in its futility, the voice of the well-wishing man who does no harm, who lives to himself when the

world is crying out for his help. Just as the big-game hunter feels at one with nature when the corpse is lying at his feet, so the good husband and father complacently surveys his family across the outstretched hands of the husbandless and fatherless.

Alan Paton has taught us to listen for the next voice:

> The child coughs badly, her brow is hotter than fire. Quietly my child, your mother is by you. Outside there is laughter and jesting, digging and hammering, and calling in languages that I do not know. Quietly my child, there is a lovely valley where you were born. The water sings over the stones and the wind cools you. The cattle come down to the river, they stand there under the trees. Quietly my child, oh God make her quiet. God have mercy on us. Christ have mercy on us. White man, have mercy upon us.

The speech has drifted into a litany, reminding us of the continuing values which Alan Paton finds in religion. The voice, the voice of Africa, flows primeval and eternal, like the truths of religion itself.

The third voice speaks for the permanence of love in the midst of despair. The aunt in *Too Late the Phalarope* has loved her soldier-rugby-player-policeman nephew with the anguish of a woman who has never held her own child. After his crime, when his miscegenation is known, she alone of his family stands by his side. How can she judge? she asks.

> Shall I judge myself, that should have hammered at the door and cried out not ceasing? Or shall I judge my brother, that was proud of the boy with the wild horse and ashamed of the girl with the wild flower? . . . And shall I judge the dark, unhappy boy, who had such strange and lonely pleasures, and was brave and gentle, and was master of all things save one, and of his choice went seeking in the filth? And shall I judge my God and the Lord of all compassion, who made us all, and filled us with dark, strange things, that one goes lawful and obedient and another is destroyed? Therefore I cannot judge at all, except to wish she had been otherwise.

The question heard in Nadine Gordimer's stories is not Pauline Smith's "Who am I to judge?" but Alan Paton's "How can anyone judge?" Her theme is incomprehension—people in her stories

bump accidentally and gnaw each other like savage fish in the dark. Then a flash of the author's compassion makes the darkness visible. In her story called 'Horn of Plenty' in the collection of *Six Feet of the Country,* an attractive and sophisticated American woman is exposed in her spiritual poverty by the competence of her African servant. Pat, the mistress, looks for interest and sympathy, if not affection; Rebecca, the servant, seems to Pat so confident in her technique that her detachment looks almost like contempt. Rebecca does not think of offering coffee when Pat is tired unless she has received an explicit order; she is prepared to handle a beautiful dress with the greatest care, but not to respond to the pleasure Pat finds in the dress. In her failure to break through Rebecca's impeccable competence, Pat recognizes the germ of her own inadequacy, the sense of deficiency that has made her give up New York and choose a husband who would take her to the anonymity of Africa.

> She was remembering nights in New York [her husband] could not know about, when, suddenly, in a taxi, or as she stepped into her own doorway, the laughter and repartee she had just left seemed to mock her, as if she heard its echo above her own grave, and she forgotten, lost to it. Nights germinating in the very height of their stimulation and pleasure, that seed of dismal fear; nights because of which she had chosen him, and his job on another continent. "I want love," she was saying with passion. "Someone who says, 'How pretty you look, Mrs McCleary; how young, how beautifully you do things . . . ' You do see, don't you ———? Loved and cared for and wanted. That's how I want to feel, all the time."

Pat is chafing not at the inflexibility of the master servant relationship, but at the mockery of fortune that has sent her success and happiness and admiration, and in its prodigality left out the drop of the divine essence, the gift of grace, without which the happiest life is a technique of living as cold as Rebecca's competence. This is not a study of race relations. The very fact, hard and impregnable, that the races in South Africa are separated by barriers that neither good will nor malevolence can break, Nadine Gordimer has used as an analytic probe into Pat's soul-sickness—her inability to experience love as a force from within and her dependence on the comfort of love bestowed by other

eople. We see her situation most clearly in the moment of her esentment against Rebecca.

The refusal to judge, on the part of Pauline Smith, Alan Paton nd Nadine Gordimer, is connected rather with their compassionate iew of the human predicament than with the necessities of their riting. Olive Schreiner finds no difficulty in judging, nor Sarah ertrude Millin; they judge as writers, within the context of their bservation, and the value of their judgments depends on the ignificance of their observations. Dan Jacobson, too, finds no ifficulty in judging; in his book about America, *No Further West,* is judgments, many remarkably penetrating, fly in all directions. Jnlike writers conscious of a mission, Dan Jacobson would try, ke Keats, "to let the mind be a thoroughfare for all thoughts, ot a select party." Some of the thoughts that come through the horoughfare of Dan Jacobson's observations are terrifying. His rst novel, *The Trap,* dealing with relations between farmers and eir labourers, raises agonising questions—where is trust, where security, where is human dignity, when all relations are distorted y an underground hostility suppressed by law and by force? lternatively, in the oscillations of a relationship based on con- dence and mutual esteem, humour may move along the thorough- re. In *The Price of Diamonds,* two Jewish partners in a manu- cturers' agency live on terms of barely suppressed rivalry and asperation. They suspect each other in every trivial detail, yet ey trust each other in everything essential; they live for their rtnership, for their grunting, bristling affection for each other.

The horror in *A Dance in the Sun* is made more haunting by its sual presentation. The young men accidentally stumble on a tid complex of degeneracy, miscegenation, crime and violence, e fag-end of a pioneer family sinking into the mud as they outh phrases about white civilization. The narrator turns from in disgust to a culture he can only imagine:

> It was a kind of homesickness, I felt then, but it was a sick- ness for a home I had never had, for a single cultivated scene, for a country less empty and violent, for a people whose manners and skins and languages were fitted peaceably together . . . A multi-tongued nation of nomads we seemed to be, across a country too big and silent for us, too dry for cultivation, about

which we went on roads like chains. We were caught within it within this wide, sad land we mined but did not cultivate.

In sadness and in sympathy, these writers express their loyalty to the best of their native land. Writing about a scene drought stricken for lack of understanding or wisdom or love, these writers affirm that life still squirms beneath the surface, that tolerance and generosity and vision are fundamentally indigenous to the soil of Africa.

5. THE LANGUAGE OF THE LAND

GUY BUTLER

Allow your eye to browse slowly over a map of our country, ronouncing the names, savouring them. When, and by whom, nd why were these names given to these bays and headlands, ivers and ranges, farms, towns and provinces? There they are, ouvenirs and signatures from five centuries, in curious verbal equence of Afrikaans or English or African or other origin: Kariega lies by Kenton-on-Sea next to Boesmansriviermond; or here is Knysna, George, Mosselbaai.

The Portuguese, who unveiled the profile of our coast, vainly alled Mosselbaai, Sao Brâs. Few of their names did, in fact, tick; the Rio da Infanta was renamed—probably by a humorist—he Great Fish River. Algoa and Delagoa Bay have survived, and he name they gave to a country they sailed beside on a Christmas Day—Natal.

Inland, beyond the coastal fringe, there were, of course, people: he apricot-coloured Hottentots and Bushmen, who had their ames for animals and plants, rivers and ranges; but no maps. They had a prefix for river: Ka—Kasouga, Kariega; so had the all, dark and handsome race who were pushing them southward: Jm—Umfolosi, Umgeni, Umtata. Some of these peoples have lisappeared or been absorbed; their only memorial a name on a nap, or a word adopted into the speech of their conquerors, like Karoo.

Maps of the South African interior are empty of names until he seventeenth century; then they come thick and fast. For a entury they are mainly in Dutch; some of them descriptive, like Rondebosch, or Blauberg Strand; others after people, like Con-tantia, Swellendam, Plettenberg, Graaff-Reinet. The flora and auna were receiving their names too, precisely, picturesquely; vitstamboom, kanniedood. More occasionally a naturalist would tudy a plant, and baptize it into the international world of science, lessing it with a beautiful polysyllabic name which could never, las, be popular: *Leucodendron argenteum* or *Disa langicornu*.

Inland, the old Latin word *fons*—in its Dutch disguise, *fontein* —was ousting the Hottentot word for water, *kamma*—a word which, however, survives in Tsitsikamma, Kragga Kamma Keiskamma. Long-forgotten moments of violence or content left their bare finger-print clue of a name to tease us: Moordenaar's Nek, Vogelgesang.

Then, at the turn of the eighteenth century, the English. Just as the Dutch before them had borrowed liberally from Hottentot Bushman and Xhosa, so we English have borrowed from all who preceded us. That inestimable, irrepressible man Jeremiah Goldswain, for instance, seems to find a certain satisfaction in using the word *tronk* instead of gaol. This is an interesting word, not Dutch, but brought from the East Indies, derived frim the Malay *trungu*—but not itself an old Malay word—a word taken from our old friends, the Portuguese.

Pringle borrows lavishly from Dutch and Xhosa: he loves sounding these strange syllables, smacking them on his terse Scots palate: 'Katabe', 'Amangleyi.'

> From Keissis' meads, from Chumies' hoary woods,
> Bleak Tarka's dens, and Stormberg's rugged fells,
> To where Gareep pours down his sounding floods,
> Through regions where the hunted Bushmen dwells . . .

Faced with the practicalities of African transport, the Settlers soon adopted words like trek, outspan, inspan, sjambok, riem, veld, drift. They named their villages and towns after people—frequently after royalty: Victoria West, George, Queenstown, King William's Town; or nostalgically after places in Britain: East London, Cambridge, Worcester, Malmesbury, Devon, Melrose. Sometimes they were more subtle. The settlers who founded Verulam in Natal came from St Albans, England, the site of the old Roman outpost of Verulam. They chose the ancient name, no doubt, feeling a closer affinity with the pioneering Romans than with their contemporaries in Victorian England.

The process of naming is still going on; and, of course, the process of re-naming. Some names die a rapid death, others are curiously tenacious. We do not know by what name the Bushmen called the highest mountain in the Cape; but a glance at its spectacular, steep peak explains at once why the first trekboer called it Spitzkop. But after Governor Plettenberg had used its great height for survey and mapping purposes, it was re-named

Compassberg. But nearly two hundred years later you will still hear the old name used from time to time. So, too, the Bushman name has remained for those usually green heights against which the great Karoo plains of Aberdeen and Willowmore break in a great dry sea: the Camdeboo.

There is nothing permanent about names on maps. Politics is interested in maps, and in names, and frequently takes a hand. The Russian revolutionaries changed Petrograd to Leningrad; Constantinople becomes Istanbul; the Gold Coast becomes Ghana; and I can remember a Clarendon Street being renamed Voortrekkerstraat in my home town.

But at present the South African map is a rich, picturesque document; many languages and races and generations have signed their names on it, as people will on a smooth and ancient rock face. You cannot travel a hundred miles or live a day without passing place-names or using words which derive from at least three sources—African, Afrikaans, English—possibly also from the Portuguese, who got no foothold, or the apricot-coloured peoples who were destroyed or absorbed.

It is these last who fascinate me: they were ground to pulp between the advancing white and black frontiersmen. The fact that their language had once been spoken from the Zambezi to Cape Point did not save them. They survive tenuously in our speech—a few words, a few place names.

What chances of survival has English in Africa—between the Zambezi and Cape Point?

We must face the fact that the practical and political advantages of having one language in a land are great and compelling. We perhaps underrate just how great a barrier to understanding and national unity bilingualism or trilingualism is. Now in any country of competing nationalisms there is a natural tendency for the major contestants to absorb or eliminate smaller groups. We rank as a smaller group.

We are a minority within the white group—and the trend is to become a smaller minority. We lack the cohesion of the Afrikaans language group on the one hand, and the deep assurance that vast numbers and increasing racial cohesion give to the Blacks. Overseas commentators, almost without exception, see the struggle here as one between Afrikaner and African nationalism. We English are, apparently, unable or unwilling to turn it into a triangular contest.

Under these circumstances we are likely to be slowly crushed politically, and culturally absorbed by one or other — possibly both—of the main contestants: flotsam on the tide of other people's nationalism, their assistants, allies, or stooges.

It is a depressing picture—if one regards the present shape of extreme white and black nationalism as the only sort of nationalism possible in such a situation: competitive, internecine nationalism within one country. Is nothing else possible? I shall return to this question later.

First, a word of comfort, chiefly for those who are satisfied with a little.

In my own mind I have little doubt that English has an assured future in South Africa as a *contact language*. Every emergent or modern state *needs* a world language, and English is *the* world language to-day; it is too useful to be discarded. (There is nothing for us to be smug about—*we* didn't give English its world status, and are doing very little to maintain it. It's just our good luck, that's all.)

But survival as a contact language is a very different thing from acceptance as one of the living official languages of the land. For what is a contact language? A rudimentary instrument for the easy transmission of facts and techniques; a way to convey the know-how, for doing business. Something much less than the dog Latin of the Middle Ages, which was, at least, the language of the medieval and universal church; something closer to pidgin English: a sort of European 'fanagalo'. This sort of English is already widely spoken and written in our country—make no mistake. It is not a fantastic joke, but a sad fact.

How are we to keep English alive as one of the vital, creative languages of our land? Because it does happen to be as much a South African langauge as any other. For the past century and a half we have *not*, as some are inclined to think, been entirely concerned with money-making and industry. There have been thinkers and writers and statesmen and men of vision among us. We were, at one time—the nineteenth century—a politically imaginative and creative force. What have we been doing for the past fifty years? Finding our feet in Africa, getting our bearings, I hope; preparing for a new role, a role which we must accept or go to the wall.

The basis of this role is humble; to accept our responsibilities as bearers of a contact language seriously: to make the knowledge

f the world available to all our countrymen of whatever race, o provide dedicated teachers and ample funds for this task. To be seful is a positive good. To be in possession of a world language ould give us a degree of wisdom and necessary detachment, at mes, from a too local view of things. We can, as Professor Iaarhoff has suggested, be to South Africa what the ancient Romans were to the Gauls.

We can, I believe, be something else. A role has been started or us by certain of our leaders and writers, here in our land.

We see its beginning in Pringle; not a great poet, but an honest an—which as this world goes, is to be one in a thousand. Pringle tried to see and speak clearly. He fought and won—at reat personal cost—the battle for the freedom of our press. He ppreciated the colours and shapes of African objects and animals, nd her different races. He looked for potential friends, not nemies. And he was not afraid to use certain words of which ur consciences have become shamefully shy: justice and liberty.

Next comes Olive Schreiner, an infinitely better writer; pro-African, pro-Boer; trying hard, and sometimes successfully, to get eyond our racial and political *clichés,* to see the man under the haki tunic or behind the rawhide shield. There are other figures: he great missionaries, Moffatt and Livingstone, against whom our inds have been unfairly prejudiced; governors like Sir George Grey: and a great army of efficient and dedicated teachers and dministrators without whom our land would be infinitely more iolent and tragic than it is.

At Union, it seems a certain confusion fell upon our thought. As long ago as the mid-twenties, William Plomer and Roy Campbell saw, quite clearly, the falsity of our artificially protected nd privileged position; and they said so, with energy and wit. Anthony Delius has recently attempted the same sane-making ask; to make healthy by laughter. Not one of them is a racialist r a jingo: they snipe at folly, whatever its political or national olour.

A writer like Alan Paton is so concerned to communicate his ense of the life of his African fellow countrymen, that he invents particular prose style to communicate it—as in *Cry, the Beloved Country.* When the setting of the story is rural and Afrikaans, he evises another style, as in *Too Late the Phalarope.*

Nearly all English South African writers and leaders believe hat there is a life in which all South Africans do already share

and could share more fully. They see differences and they do not underrate them; they do not regard them as necessarily good, or pre-ordained, or eternal. They are what we might call open to all men.

Now this, as a Christian and a Westerner, I believe to be a most wonderful thing: it is proof that a great tradition has struck root in a new soil; outward, not inward turning; experimental; foolishly obstinately insistent that the great tragic gaps between the sons of God are there to be bridged, not worshipped.

It seems to me that the role of English—caught between two increasingly violent and exclusive nationalisms—is to keep on stating, with patience and courage, that our common humanity can unite us. Our country has been named by us all, it belongs to us all, we all belong to it. Let us accept each other: with affection when this comes naturally; with courtesy where it is difficult; and with common sense always. Our dead have left their names side by side on a map; a mountain range can be one, although its peaks may be called Gaika's Kop, the Hogsback, and the Katberg; one ocean washes Mosselbaai and George, and Knysna; and the blood in all our veins is red.

6. THE LIVING STREAM

G. H. DURRANT

TO talk about the special virtues of the English language in a quarter of an hour is a very tall order. There are about alf a million words in the English language—at a very rough stimate—and its literature is so enormous that nobody can know nore than a corner of it. Shakespeare managed a vocabulary of bout twenty-four thousand words, but most of us have to content urselves with two or three thousands words, since our limited rains cannot manage a larger number. But it is quality that natters, not mere size; and the quality of a language depends pon the people who speak and write it. They in their turn lepend for the quality of their language on the dead writers who ave developed the resources of the language and have shown us ow to use them to the best advantage.

You can do a great deal, of course, with very limited resources —that is, you can if you are a genius. The translators of Genesis n the Authorized Version of the Bible took the simplest English words, almost all of them of Anglo-Saxon origin, and using the implest English sentence patterns, created a style that is certainly grand, and might be called sublime.

> In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
> And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters.
> And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.
> And God saw the light, that it was good . . .

In that passage there are fifty-one words of one syllable only, nd only six words of more than one syllable. And nearly all he words are of Anglo-Saxon origin. The effect is to make us eel the elemental nature of the act of creation; it concerns the imple basic facts of the world. An instinctive feeling for the ature of the language made these learned men avoid elaborate r learned language when they were trying to express the simple vonder of the creation.

Here is another example of the simple style used to create an effect of grandeur and also, this time, of ecstasy. This famous passage from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*—written almost three hundred years ago—describes the death of Mr Valiant-for-Truth. He is shown as crossing the river of death into the life hereafter. The words are almost as simple as those I have quoted from Genesis, but they are linked by a gently flowing rhythm that unifies the whole passage into a pattern of quiet strong exultation:

> When he understood the summons, he called for his friends, and told them of it. Then, said he, "I am going to my Father's; and though with great difficulty I am got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him that can get it. My marks and scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me, that I have fought his battles who now will be my rewarder." When the day that he must go hence was come, many accompanied him to the river side, into which as he went he said, "Death, where is thy sting?" And as he went down deeper, he said, "Grave, where is thy victory?" So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.

Now in that passage, apart from the very subtle rhythm that links it all together, Bunyan uses the ordinary speech of conversation. "Then, said he, I am going to my Father's . . ." There has been some change in word order since Bunyan's day, but this still sounds natural enough to us. Into this pattern of cunning simplicity, Bunyan has inserted passages of bold Biblical rhetoric: "Death, where is thy sting?" "Grave, where is thy victory?" These are linked with the quieter language of the rest of the passage at the end, when Bunyan clinches the whole effect with the last sentence, simple in form, but wonderfully poetic in its suggestion of harmony, glory, and joy: "So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side."

In that passage Bunyan writes the homespun language of common speech with the rhetoric of the poetic passages of the Hebrew Bible; and the apparently artless language shines with spiritual radiance.

But of course there are many other ways of using the English language. If we think of Milton, for example, we remember that English can be used in a very different way. In Milton it is the

complex and Latinized vocabulary and word-order that predominate, and the passages of ordinary English stand out in his work in bold contrast. Here, for example, is his description of Lucifer being thrown out of Heaven by God after his rebellion. You will notice how the long ringing Latin words—"omnipotent", "combustion", "adamantine", "ethereal" and "perdition" are played off against the strong and very concrete words of Anglo-Saxon or Norman-French origin, such as "flaming", "headlong", "bottomless" and "down". Together they form a violent tempest of sound, reflecting the violence of the action; and whilst the Latin words help to give grandeur to the passage, they also set off, by contrast, the simple force of the more ordinary English words. And by using a word-order that is not at all that of English, but is copied from that of Latin, Milton is able to make a highly unified but very complicated rhythmic pattern.

He trusted to have equall'd the most High,
If he oppos'd; and with ambitious aim
Against the Throne and Monarchy of God
Rais'd impious war in Heav'n and battel Proud
With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power
Hurld headlong flaming from th' Ethereal Sky
With hideous ruine and combustion down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In Adamantine Chains and penal Fire
Who durst defy th' Omnipotent to Arms.

It is hard to imagine how Milton could have achieved the speed and the strength together which make this passage so fine if he had not used this special combination of Latin and Germanic words, each group setting off and heightening the effect of the other.

In Shakespeare we find an even greater resourcefulness in using all the riches of the English language. To give a fairly simple example: when Macbeth is looking at his bloodstained hands after the murder of Duncan, he is disturbed by a knocking at the gate:

Whence is that knocking?
How is't with me, when every noise appals me?
What hands are here? ha! they pluck out mine eyes.
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

Here the Latin words—"Neptune's ocean", "multitudinous"," incarnadine"—add an additional dimension to the poem. The "seas" which are green and will be stained red with the blood from Macbeth's hand suggest the ordinary and familiar sea, and by that means make the poetry more direct and the horror greater. But "Neptune's ocean" suggests something at once grander and wider, whilst "incarnadine", as another way of saying 'stain red', adds a further touch of mystery. "Multitudinous" suggests the infinity of waves in the ocean far better than would the simpler word 'many', So by drawing on both the Latin and Germanic words, and even using a pair of words of similar meaning but of different origin and with different associations, Shakespeare succeeds in combining a feeling of immediate horror with the more mystical dread of the infinite and mysterious forces of Nature which will avenge the murder.

But that is a very simple example—at least for Shakespeare. A passage from the same play will serve to remind us of the astonishing power that Shakespeare wields, and of his apparently magical command of all the resources of the language. Here is Macbeth's speech—or rather part of it—when he begins to think what it will mean to have committed a murder:

> . . . He's here in double trust:
> First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
> Strong both against the deed; then, as his host
> Who should against the murderer shut the door,
> Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
> Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
> So clear in his great office, that his virtues
> Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
> The deep damnation of his taking-off;
> And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
> Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim, horsed
> Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
> Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
> That tears shall drown the wind.

This astonishing passage shows the kind of rich complexity that English is capable of. Even in Shakespeare's day, the English language was a great river into which many tributaries had flowed—the original stream of Anglo-Saxon had been mixed with Danish and Celtic words, and with the Conquest there followed

e inflowing of Norman-French and the words and values of ediaeval chivalry. The language was further enriched by the atin of the Church and later by the revived classical Latin and reek of the Renaissance. It is not the mere addition of new ords that matters, so much as the enrichment of the language the concepts for which the words stand. So in this passage we e the simple notion of the bond between Duncan and Macbeth xpressed in the Anglo-Saxon word *kinsman,* and the evil of the urder in the common word *knife,* whilst the obligations of a lord his guest and his king are reflected in words of Anglo-French igin—*host, clear, office, couriers,* words which suggest the moral de of knightly chivalry and honour which Macbeth is breaking. hen there are Latin words that suggest the humanist morality ancient Rome and of the Renaissance — *faculties, virtues, nbition,* words which came to the language through French, but ll have their original Latin quality. And there are words which rry with them suggestions of the teachings of the Church— *mnation, angels, cherubim*—Hebrew, Greek and Latin terms hich put the whole passage into the context of Heaven and Hell. Of course all these words are strongly modified and controlled the way they are used in the passage. They work upon each her and change each other profoundly. But it is interesting, ven if a little artificial, to look at these individual words, for they lp us to realize that the English language, even in Shakespeare's ay, was equipped to reflect the whole intellectual and moral life Western Europe. Only a great genius like Shakespeare could lly use the resources of such a language.

Since Shakespeare's day English has assumed an even wider gnificance. What began as the language of part of an island, eflecting the life of a small people, became by Shakespeare's day ne language of a nation reflecting the life of Europe. It has to-day ecome the language of nations, reflecting the life of the world. must therefore continue to grow and change as it has always one in the past. Unlike those languages which have been pruned id controlled by academies and professors, English owes its rength to its native vigour, to its poets, and to its freedom to ake or adopt new words. The pedant may wince at a new ord like 'television', which mixes Latin and Greek. But the nglish language has a strong digestion. It can make use of many rious and apparently conflicting elements. Yet the true glory the English language lies not in its variety and strength, but

in the use that has been made of it in the past, and is being made of it to-day, by writers who find it the natural instrument of the free mind.

> We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
> That Shakespeare spake . . .

The poet's lines are very relevant, for the very life of the English language consists in its freedom to change and grow.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Seeing is Believing, by Charles Tomlinson. Oxford University Press, 1960. 80 p, Price 12s. 6d. (R1.25)

The limits of Charles Tomlinson's poetry are obvious and unusual. He writes always in the speaking, never the singing, voice: a formal gravity with some wit but no gaiety. There is little drama and there are no people: men enter his poems only as they are known by their works. His subject matter is weathers, places, and paintings of these. Politics, the pet of fashionable poetry, he mentions but once or twice, with scorn; the perennial topics (love, children, war) not at all. He can contemplate violence from a distance, but not *express* violence of feeling or action. The few attempts in this volume at a direct expression of feeling are poor and thin. But limitation is Mr. Tomlinson's aim: to secure an effect that is precise and certain, even if at the expense of warmth or grandeur. If the voice does not sing, it speaks both clearly and subtly, and its quiet rhythms always control and point the sense. The careful forming of the lines, the suspension on "hangs," the energy of "lifts," convey the movement of the wave which

> Launched into an opposing wind, hangs
> Grappled beneath the onrush,
> And there, lifts, curling in spume,
> Unlocks, drops from that hold
> Over and shoreward . . .
>
> *The Atlantic*

Mr Tomlinson abjures rhetoric; or rather, his favourite device of rhetoric, as he puts it in "Epitaph", is "the pretence of having none." The title of his book—*Seeing is Believing*—explains the intention of his art. He aims to *present*, not to *persuade*: to present, reticently, impersonally, and clearly, an image or object or situation or place, simply as it offers itself to the eye; and to let the gathering of perceptions imply its own meaning:

These, though of moment in themselves,
Serve rather to articulate the sense
That having met, one meets with more
Than the words can witness. One feels behind
Into the intensity that bodies through them.

Winter Encounters

The landscapes in these poems are themselves and not symbols, or at least no more symbolic than the poet exactly states, yet cumulatively they achieve a moral quality, become landscapes of the mind. He is concerned with the static, the central stillness behind the shifting light:

How through that broken calm, as the sun emerges,
The sky flushes its blue, dyeing the grass
In the promise of a more stable tone:
Less swift, however, than the cloud is wide—
Its shadow (already) quenching the verdure . . .
. . . One conceives
Placing before them a square house
Washed in the coolness of lime, a hub
For the scattered deployment, to define
In pure white from its verdant ground
The variegated excess which threatens it.

Northern Spring

What is seen enters into a relationship with the observer—the artist—who gathers into permanent order life's "profusion of possibilities:"

We, since no mirrors,
Are free both to question this deployment
And to arrange it—what we reflect
Being what we choose.

Reflections

The artist's power to order life is purchased, Mr Tomlinson sees, by detachment from it. The price is high, for to look at life is less than to live; and anyway art itself must be a lie, for the detached spectator cannot share the experience of the enmeshed actor:

How still the hawk
Hangs innocent above
Its native wood:
Distance, that purifies the act
Of all intent, has graced
Intent with beauty.
Beauty must lie
As innocence must harm
Whose end (sited,
Held) is naked
Like the map it cowers on.
And the doom drops:
Plummet of peace
To him who does not share
The nearness and the need,
The shrivelled circle
Of magnetic fear.

Despite this fine awareness of the dilemma of detachment, Mr. omlinson chooses firmly:

And the chill grows. In this air
  Unfit for politicians and romantics
Dark hardens from blue, effacing the windows:
  A tangible block, it will be no accessory
To that which does not concern it . . .

Tramontana at Lerici

Rejecting the world of action and passion, he elects the cold iscipline that makes possible the poet's task of seeing. He makes rejection, but not a withdrawal. Art and life are different, but ıe artist's devotion to his art for its own sake (and not for any ause') is not in the least an attempt to escape from life. Mr. omlinson ventures few overt comments on the society in which e lives, but his attitudes may be inferred from his choice of ıbject (no fewer than five poems in this slim volume are about uildings let fall into disrepair), from his tributes to whatever is ell made, and from his own scrupulous craftsmanship. Where he oes speak plainly of the present, it is to contrast our "poverty of

utility" with a more generous attitude that built well because it built for the future:

> . . . I had reached
> Unchallenged, within feet of the door
> Ill-painted, but at no distant date—the least
> Our prodigal time could grudge it; paused
> To measure the love, to assess its object,
> That trusts for continuance to the mason's hand.
>
> Five centuries—here were (at the least) five—
> In linked love . . .
>
> *On the Hall at Stowey*

Reviewers have remarked on Mr Tomlinson's debt to Wallace Stevens. We may note also an affinity (not, I think, a debt) to one side of Wordsworth: a concern for what endures, in nature, in stone, in human art. His poems are filled with images of endurance: shells, stones, houses; and in the spare perspicuity of his diction, and in his formal, bare (rhymeless) verse, there is a touch of the hard and exact quality of the mason's work. In recent verse certain qualities seem almost endemic: modesty, irony, good will, social 'concern', and a deliberately relaxed technique. In this situation the poems of Charles Tomlinson are distinctive. This is thoughtful poetry, and to read it requires and rewards effortful concentration.

F. H. LANGMAN

ir Gawain and the Grene Gome; a regularized text prepared and introduced by R. T. Jones. Natal University Press, 1960. 133 p, 15s. (R1.50)

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight has but recently come into its wn. It remained almost unknown until Sir F. Madden edited it 1 1839. Since then, however, a good deal of attention has been aid it. There have been editions of the text by R. Morris for the .E.T.S. (1864), by Tolkien and Gordon (1925—the edition most amiliar to students, perhaps) and by Sir Israel Gollancz for the .E.T.S. (1940). The poem has also been translated frequently, nto prose and verse and has, indeed, been given the modern ccolade of respectable popularity by being presented, as recently s 1959, by Penguin Books, in an alliterative verse translation by David Stone. Mr R. T. Jones of the University of Natal now resents a 'regularized' text, modishly titled *Sir Gawain and the Grene Gome.*

The poem has survived in only one manuscript, in which the pelling is extremely inconsistent. In his own words, what Mr ones has done is to "select one of the scribe's spellings of each vord and use that spelling consistently throughout the poem." He as also adjusted the spelling to modern usage. A glossary is rovided of about 180 words which the student is advised to learn, as they occur frequently in the poem." The text is then set out n the right-hand pages with the corresponding left-hand pages levoted to translations of the difficult words and phrases clearly et out under line numbers. This saves the reader the book-end urrowing which has often proved a sad deterrent to those in whom the spirit is (initially, at any rate) willing, but glossarial nthusiasm weak.

The editor has not fully explained the principle by which he has referred one spelling of a word to others, in his regularizing rocess. It would seem reasonable to suppose that he has retained he most modern form in each case (e.g. he has preferred "burgh" o "borgh"). I am in some doubt, however, as to his method of hoice when the manuscript offers him, say, the variants "trawthe," 'trauthe" and "traweth" or "meiny" and "meny". He chooses 'trauthe" (presumably because of its greater resemblance to nodern 'truth') but his reasons for preferring "meiny" to "meny," hough doubtless excellent, remain unexplained.

The editor expresses the hope that, in his text, the poem "may

prove to be accessible to many who have been put off by the typographical oddities of previous editions." On his success in this respect one can, of course, only speculate. This clearly printed, regularized text, with its convenient facing-page translations may prove less daunting for many than the older editions. On the other hand, is one being, perhaps, too severe in voicing the suspicion that the "many who have been put off by the typographical oddities of previous editions" can have possessed far too little real staying power to make them worth-while readers of even the most regularized of texts?

Mr Jones has prefaced his text with a short Introduction which makes clear his genuine enthusiasm for the poem, an enthusiasm which, one feels, has occasionally betrayed him into a rather dismaying critical intolerance. An early parenthesis reads as follows:

> Any man who is not disturbed by the physical presence of Gawain's temptress should return to James Hadley Chase without further waste of time.

No Gawain for Miss Blandish, it would seem. One is cheered, however, by the implications (which will not long escape a close student of the text) of that verb 'return'.

Mr Jones is indebted, for the spirit of his Introduction, to John Speirs's essay on the poem in *Medieval English Poetry: The Non-Chaucerian Tradition* (Faber & Faber, 1957). He pays generous tribute to this essay, calling it "the one critical work of any importance on this poem." He advances a "tentative interpretation" of the poem which tallies to some extent with that of Speirs. Both see the poem as one which comments on two worlds, the Christian and the pre-Christian. On the nature of the comment, however, they differ. Speirs has this to say:

> *Sir Gawayne and the Grene Knight* is of course a Christian poem. But it is Christian rather as some of the medieval Christmas carols are, as Christmas itself is; Christian in harmony with pre-Christian nature belief and ritual, a Christian re-interpretation of these . . .

whereas Mr Jones assumes "the existence in England, in the late fourteenth century, of a highly civilized and critical mind outside the Christian tradition."

There is, in fact, nothing in Mr Jones's "tentative interpretation" which would be outside the scope of a "highly civilized and

critical mind" *within* the Christian tradition. The point is worth making only because Mr Jones seems to make the poem's relevancy to our times depend upon his assumptions about the author, when he offers a parallel between the supposedly extra-Christian mind of the poet commenting on Arthurian Christianity and the reflection cast by the poem on our civilization.

Like John Speirs, Mr Jones is anxious to dispel any idea that the poem is a mere fairy-tale. Both critics refer to the force of the lines which describe the hardships endured by Gawain in his journeyings. Mr Jones tends to labour the point somewhat and in his anxiety to demonstrate that the poet's imagination "has its roots in an intense awareness of reality" somewhat strains his material. In discussing the lines

> Ho comes withinne the chamber dore, and closes hit hir after,
> Waives up a window, and on the wighe calles . . .

he comments:

> It is no fairy tale bedroom that needs to have a window opened; nor is it a fairy-tale damsel who recognizes the stuffiness of the room as soon as she enters it.

One could just as well argue that the lady had thrown open the window, not from a wish for fresh air, but from a desire to display to Sir Gawain her extreme *décolletage*. Perhaps, however, Mr Jones might well contend that this view demonstrated equally well that "the poet's imagination has its roots in an intense awareness of reality." At any rate, in his determination to demonstrate that the poem is so rooted, he produces a moment of (presumably) unintentional humour, when he discusses line 1713:

> There thre thro at a thrich thrat him at ones.

Mr Jones comments:

> This sequence of words could only have occurred to someone whose imagination was compelling him to participate in (not merely to observe or to listen to) the snapping of dogs.

One can only hope that this moment of canine empathy did not prove too distressing for the unknown author of the poem.

Our editor seems determined to separate linguistic interests entirely from the appreciation of poetry. It seems to me that this is as aridly unproductive a division as that other dismal dichotomy between the 'historical' and the ageing 'new' criticism.

It is clear that the poem has stimulated Mr Jones and that he is hampered by the necessarily narrow confines of his Introduction. He says himself that "the authoritative critical analysis of the poem has yet to be written." Perhaps we may hope to hear more from him in the future.

The print is clear and eminently readable, the paper pleasant to handle and the price not too high, but it is something of a pity that so gorgeous a poem should be bound with such excessive drabness.

J. I. CRONIN

he Angry Old Man (Dyskolos), by Menander, translated by W. H. Hewitt and M. W. M. Pope. Cape Town, A. A. Balkema, 1960. Introduction, p. 5-14; Text, p. 15-45. 7d. 6d. (R0.75)

What an insipid little play this is! And how grateful we must e to have it smoothly translated and well introduced by the rofessor of Classics at the University of Cape Town and Mr lewitt, Senior Lecturer in Classics at Natal University. Chris van en Berg deserves congratulating for his cover—though the type- ace he chose for the title does not convince us—and Balkema for cheap and beautiful book.

Short of a play by Bacon, nothing could be conceived of more nportant and exciting than a complete text of Menander. And iis is it, a piece to be read, pondered and set side by side in the nagination with scores of plays in half a dozen languages, ancient nd modern. Just as Jesse reclines at the bottom of many a church vindow and sees a genealogical tree hung with sanctities climb ut of his astonished bowels, so Menander traditionally fathers ie polite comedy of the West. Until *Dyskolos* turned up (bought 1 1956, first published in Greek, 1959), all there existed were upils' copies (Terence), a few chunks and scraps of scenes, a andful of quotations, 98 titles and the *Pericerомene,* translated nd conjecturally completed by Gilbert Murray in 1941. Now, at ist, the avatar.

No one divulges where or how the papyrus of this play was nearthed. 'In Egypt,' is all we are told; and we may be forgiven if, fter reading it, we cannot rid ourselves of memories of the Pilt- lown skull swindle. Admittedly Menander wrote 105 plays and his one could have been left-handed or in a doze. Not that it is lull. It reads easily and would play briskly, although the plot is nakeshift: a pretty girl, a curmudgeonly father, a feeble suitor, a illy climax—father falls down a well!—and an utterly contrived enouement, set—and here is its immediate charm—in a golden elly of Hellenistic country manners.

Supposing it to be genuinely (but incredibly) from the master's iand, what possible anticipation of genius does it contain? Banish, oy the way, the defence that Menander was only 25 when he wrote t; at 25 Congreve wrote *Love for Love.* What germs of genius loes the *Dyskolos* show, albeit Menander, for all his winning the

first prize at Athens in 317 B.C., would do well to-day to take third place with it in a newspaper drama competition?

In style, an unelevated ease, all that is attainable in translation, probably, of what Meredith calls his "beautiful translucency of language." A theatrical *savoir-faire,* from such common corn as:

Gretas: All I want to borrow is a large saucepan.
Knemon [*the Angry Old Man*]: A large saucepan?
Gretas: A large saucepan.
Knemon: I'll give you a whip . . . (etc. etc.)

to the delaying of Knemon's impact until the start of Act III, or the suave exchanges between cast and audience. Put against this such comic omissions as the failure to develop Sostratos's love-sick illusions when he first meets the pretty, matter-of-fact daughter at the end of Act I. There is a little amusing anti-religious satire, no wit, some stock moralizing, the interest of which is historic rather than dramatic, and the sketchiest of characterization. It must be half wishfully, if one finds in this dawn daisy any of the summer splendour of Molière. Yet it has its own easy life:

> What little town by river or sea shore,
> Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
> Is emptied of its folk this pious morn?

To the 1570's, for instance, it would seem a miracle of accomlishment; by the 1590's even the *Comedy of Errors* makes a phantom of it.

To read and reflect on this simple, seminal play seems indispensable to a true perspective of Western comedy. All the sadder that, while to Cape Town and Natal go the honour of translating and, no doubt (though we have not heard of this yet), the pleasure of performing it, all we can do here is review it.

P. C. BIRKINSHAW

The Tempest. Recorded by The Marlowe Society and professional players. Directed by George Rylands under the auspices of The British Council and issued by the Argo Record Company in association with the Cambridge University Press, London, 1960. 3 records (which include *The Phoenix and the Turtle),* £5 15s. 6d. (R11.55)

If a random sample may be trusted, The Marlowe Society's recording of Shakespeare's plays and poems, now nearing completion, has the nature of a standard edition. In *The Tempest* the quality of recording, speaking, interpretation and direction is high and the entire presentation reliable in text and most gratifying in life and beauty. It is a relief to find it so, for these recordings are bound to exert a standardizing effect on the passive and active study of Shakespeare in schools, colleges and dramatic societies. How many Prosperos, Mirandas, Calibans, Ariels, Ferdinands in the next decade shall we not hear 'argostyled' (if we may be excused the coinage)! All the more important, therefore, while declaring the excellent reliability of this version (with the probability that other plays are equally good), that disagreements with it should be strictly noted.

Intense discussion was aroused last year by a newspaper and radio search for an English accent pleasing enough to the majority of listeners to be called "The Voice of South Africa." That an Irish immigrant came easily first in popularity was one of the smiles of the South African year. The good-natured and extremely interesting controversy which followed showed how many people preferred an English free from Afrikaans influence. This surprised me, for the earthy vigour of Gideon Roos or the nimble tongue of Uys Krige are alike as agreeable as distinctive. But no. Many correspondents argued that South Africa needed pure English and pure Afrikaans and would be best served if neither influenced the other. For such the Argo Shakespeare must be a joy and a stay. Here is perfect English: unaffected, definite, swift, subtle, harmonious. If you want standard English, here is the thoroughbred article, by London out of Cambridge.

Listening to someone we can't see is an odd habit, however accustomed telephone and radio have made us to it. The voice is isolated and magnified; and the vocal casting of a play or poem becomes an art of brilliant possibilities. It has been well, though

not surpassingly well, exercised in *The Tempest*. Miranda's young voice is subtly effective, with its honey-clogged consonants and lucid vowels; Ariel's is silver-bright, Prospero's grave, dark and powerful; Caliban's muscular and sonorous, on various occasions hissing, nasal, throaty, thick as fur. Ferdinand has an edgeless voice but a gift in using it. The rest have a uniformity that brings little help to the clarity of the plotting or the relief of the comedy. Trinculo and Stephano could and should have been differentiated more sharply, and a touch of vinegar in Antonio's voice would have been apt. One wonders how these things are cast, strictly by ear, as they are judged, or on total presence, which brings so much to confuse the issue.

Individual interpretation is generally good. A few faults occur, of which the Boatswain's "All clapped, under hatches" is one (and a charming one!), Prospero's neglect of the exposed 'but', another (IV.i.15); Ferdinand's correct response to the same indication in III.i.5 makes an interesting contrast. While an admirable intelligibility reigns and the display of intonational resource gives continuous pleasure, the inner rhythm of long speeches is not well realized. It reveals itself only when the right things are hit in the right way at the right time; and in this skill the cast is least proficient. Prospero's impact is often dulled through it, and sometimes Ariel's—the great harpy speech is a mess. Nor does Caliban discover the plasticity his speeches possess, although his physical participation in his words is admirable, as, in the comic scenes, is his purely vocal establishment of a different plane of being. Ferdinand has the gift of holding his speeches together, and the scene between him and Miranda, with Prospero chiming in (III.i.), is Veronese in sound.

Direction is too regular in pace, even when allowance is made for the absence of an audience, with all that implies in generating zest and variety of performance. Cues are often slow and the various scenes which are, after all, like little movements in music, lack the variety their nature calls for. Olivier's *Richard III* makes an illuminating comparison. Its breath-taking pace and *acted* pauses, for instance, have an erratic vitality closer to Shakespeare than the measured clarity and finely intelligible beauty of this recording. The Marlowe Society has placed too much reliance on Coleridge's remark [quoted in the record-case] that Shakespeare's "works may be said to have been recited rather than acted."

Finally, to Prospero. For all its intelligence, the conception is oo solemn. If Prospero suggests heaviness, the play is never per-neated, as it should be, with the spirit of comedy. The part needs laying, not with but against, the mantic bias given it by the owering speeches in Act IV. If Prospero is already foretasting

> . . . the rarer action
> Is in virtue than in vengeance . . .

vhen he meets Miranda, Ariel, Caliban and Ferdinand in Act I, he blight of boredom, to which this part is notoriously prone, is nescapable; especially in that Sahara of a scene with Miranda. He must belong with the rest of the cast, and only rarely suggest he strange fires of his "rough magic." There are ample oppor-unities to be tender (which the actor is) and humorous (which he s not) with Miranda; wry, rather than self-pitying with himself; stern with a twinkling eye to Ariel, and a parodist of the heavy father to the lovers. Only in that prophetic essay in *apartheid,* delivered to Caliban, is his temper harsher and uglier than the strange creature he curses. Even so, his final "Go to, away" need not be as unrelenting as we hear it. By then Prospero has succeeded in his intricate and exacting design. Here again the actor underplays the common touch in Prospero. It is wrong to assume the hierophant knows his "high charms" will work, that he has only to press buttons, as it were, to reconcile his puppets. Prospero divines his moment with a tense and mysterious elevation of spirit. He summons his powers and drives them home with anxious energy. He triumphs with a sense of glory and exhaustion. Such notes of fallibility bring freshness to a part which is great not because it is godlike, but because its humanity is mysteriously endowed.

P. C. BIRKINSHAW

BOOKS RECEIVED

Landfall, Vol. XIV, No. 3, September, 1960. Caxton Press, Christchurch, New Zealand. A Literary Quarterly. Subscription 20s. post free. (Contents: New Zealand poetry and prose, cultural and educational commentaries and reviews.)

The Living Shakespeare, ed., with an Introduction, by Robert Gittings. Heinemann, 1960. 154p. 12s. 6d. (Fifteen popular talks by the highest authorities, commissioned by the Overseas Service of the BBC.)

Three Twentieth-Century Portuguese Poets, by J. M. Parker. Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1960. 41p. 3s. 9d. (37c). (A lecture on the poetry of Fernando Pessoa, Mário de Sá-Carneiro and José Régio, by the Lecturer in Portuguese at the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.)

Études Anglaises, XIII Year, No. 2, April-June, 1960. (Special number 'Shakespeare et le Theatre Elizabéthain en France depuis Cinquante Ans'.) Also XIII Year, No. 3, July-September, 1960. Librairie Didier, Paris. Subscription, 20 NF a year. (The special number is a comprehensive and well-illustrated survey of the last fifty years of Shakespearean theatre and scholarship in France. Its separate price is 15NF and it is chiefly in French.

The ordinary number is chiefly in English and includes articles on Marston, Melville, Osbert Sitwell, and the astrological vocabulary of Shakespeare, as well as substantial book reviews, etc.)

Note.—Several publications not mentioned have been received and are under consideration for review in the next number of *English Studies in Africa.*

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